Caring for Korea:
Engendering War and Aid in the American Century

by

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Department of History
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Adriane Lentz-Smith

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Department of
History in the Graduate School
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

“Caring for Korea” examines American relief work during and following the Korean War (1950-1953), and the way that humanitarianism shaped American Cold War approaches to empire. Centering aid workers, I highlight the lives and experiences of Americans who expressed concern for Koreans and mobilized that concern to build influence in East Asia. Utilizing records from government agencies, the United Nations, and church and relief organizations, I find incomplete American hegemony, even as the U.S. controlled and utilized many different institutions to exert its will in Korea. My research shows how through humanitarian work, the labor of empire was gendered, soft, and flexible; and that the agents of empire used American influence to work for their own goals.
Dedication

For Zachary

Everything changes, the wheel of the law turns without pause.

After the rain, good weather.

In the wink of an eye

The universe throws off its muddy cloths.

For ten thousand miles the landscape

Spreads out like a beautiful brocade.

Gentle sunshine. Light breezes. Smiling flowers,

Hang in the trees, amongst the sparkling leaves,

All the birds sing at once.

Men and animals rise up reborn.

What could be more natural?

After sorrow comes happiness.

--Ho Chi Minh, “Good Days Coming”

Translated by Kenneth Rexroth
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Introduction: Korea and the Making of American Power

On May 1, 1954, members of 60,000 veterans’ organizations posts across the United States took to the streets in the American Korean Foundation’s “Veterans March for Korea.” The march, timed as a patriotic, anti-communist action symbolically significant on May Day, kicked off a month-long initiative as part of AKF’s campaign to “help the Korean people help themselves,” a $10,000,000 fundraising campaign which started two weeks earlier.¹ The veterans and auxiliary members carried scrolls signed by President Dwight Eisenhower, soliciting signatures from Americans pledging to continue to help Korea ten months after the armistice had ended the fighting there. The scrolls were to be sent to South Korean President Syngman Rhee, signifying Americans’ continued dedication to the cause.

The Veterans March was part of a broader American Korean Foundation fundraising push in Spring 1954. Other activities included a tour of the Korean Children’s Choir, and a series of train tours to collect funds and goods across the country. President of AKF Howard Rusk and his wife Gladys recruited high-ranking state officials into projects: commander of the Eighth Army, General James A. Van Fleet,

served as chairman, and Gladys Rusk persuaded First Lady Mamie Eisenhower to host a tea for the women of AKF at the White House. Gladys Rusk tried to get Mamie Eisenhower to head a mission of women to Korea that spring, but the First Lady demurred, offering instead encouraging words: “I want to wish Godspeed to the group of American women visiting Korea under the auspices of the American Korean Foundation at the invitation of [First Lady of Korea] Mrs. Rhee. The problems of the Korean people, especially of the women of Korea who have so courageously shouldered the sufferings caused by Communist military aggression, remain vast, and they deserve the sympathetic attention of all of us.”

President Eisenhower offered similar sentiments, “enthusiastically” endorsing AKF’s fundraising to the American public as a way to show continuing sympathy for Korea. As AKF publicity for the fundraiser emphasized, the President endorsed a demonstration of “people to people” efforts to restore Korea’s economy.

The American Korean Foundation’s activities in 1954 are telling of the United States’ relationship with Korea at the time. Ostensibly a private organization, the

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2 The Eighth United States Army was the U.S.’s primary fighting force in Korea.


American Korean Foundation mobilized government contacts, as well as business and church officials, to support relief efforts. The American government chimed in through relatively low-stakes and low-investment gestures, like Eisenhower lending his voice to fundraising campaigns and his signature to the scrolls the veterans carried on their march. Beyond supporting privately-driven aid measures, the president emphasized the publicity and moral utility of such efforts: over and over the U.S. government highlighted “people to people” measures to help Koreans. “Helping Koreans” was the primary language through which Americans engaged the country. Whether efforts came through soldiers, missionaries, or Americans at home, the U.S. centered a framework of individuals caring for Koreans to save the country from the devastation of war and the threat of communism. In the wake of the expensive but indecisive war, one which asked Americans to sacrifice for a country little understood or cared for, “helping Koreans” shaped a new logic for internationalism in the early Cold War, one based on anticommunism, civic and spiritual duty, and sympathy for a remote and abstract ally.

“Caring for Korea” examines, for the first time, how everyday Americans mobilized for the Korean War and what the lasting effects were. Voluntary foreign aid, I argue, provided an avenue through which the United States government and military could elicit civilians’ participation in war-making while at the same time managing pervasive anxieties about the possibility of another global war. In the 1950s, civilians at home in the U.S., and civic and religious organizations operating domestically and
abroad, collaborated with international, governmental, and military initiatives to fund and carry out relief work in the form of medical care, housing, job training, child care, education, and more. The Army, State Department, and American and foreign UN agents asked not for scrap drives, price controls, and full-blown arms industrialization, which had left civilian voters in World War II drained and wary of new conflicts. Rather, they asked individuals, churches, and communities to offer prayers and medium-sized donations of goods and money to support relief efforts for displaced and injured Koreans.

The Korean War required forceful mobilization: there was a draft, and the economy shifted somewhat toward wartime production. But the focus on voluntary aid arose precisely to counter fears of mandatory mobilization efforts that resembled those of World War II, as a way of presenting this war as more casual, more voluntary, less menacing. Indeed, government officials put a premium on voluntary aid that promoted “people to people” contact between Americans and Koreans, which in the end far surpassed the U.S.’s relatively miniscule financial commitments to such programs. Furthermore, by mobilizing voluntary agencies with ethical authority to support Army

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[^6]: In 1952, Eisenhower ran for President—and won in a landslide—on the promise to end the Korean War—a promise on which he mostly delivered with the July 1953 armistice. Eisenhower’s threats to expand the war ironically won over war-weary Americans because they came with the promise of a quick and decisive blow to Communist forces, which would end the war faster and more clearly (and more victoriously) than drawn out-peace talks keeping Korea divided at the 38th parallel. Eisenhower did not deliver on that pledge, but his more forceful stance on Korea (compared to Truman) won over the American public. Elizabeth Edwards Spalding, *The First Cold Warrior: Harry Truman, Containment, and the Remaking of Liberal Internationalism* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 227-228.

The U.S. mobilized voluntary aid through tacit and explicit sponsorship in order to manage American investments in Korea: claiming a leadership position in development in the peninsula on one hand, and downplaying responsibilities there on the other. Sponsorship for religiously motivated humanitarianism served as a work-around to side step questions like, "why is the U.S. involved in Korea?" and "why hasn’t the U.S. been victorious in Korea?" This history is significant because it reveals a substantial and under-studied component of the transformation of American approaches to war after World War II. Where military policy in regards to Korea raised the question, "how do we go to war without declaring war?" attendant civilian contributions raised the question, "how do we keep American attention on the war effort without engendering either too much criticism or too much militarism?" Aid
workers’ entrepreneurial approaches to relief work in Korea captured Americans’ support and sent a clear message about who was responsible for taking care of Koreans and who was most qualified to do so.

This project centers on the Americans involved with voluntary aid efforts, and in so doing highlights the complexities of imperial practice. These humanitarian entrepreneurs were neither wholly agents of empire, nor wholly resistant to empire. Rather, they fought to make known their own importance, and enlisted whatever resources they could access to advance their own cause. This is not to claim maleficence:

Aid workers saw their respective organizations as uniquely poised to serve needy Koreans, and worked hard to improve their station and access to resources for precisely that reason. In some cases, such moves were successful, especially in that they built enduring institutions in Korea, as ensuing chapters will show.

This project offers fresh insight into how war shaped society and politics in the post-World War II world. I contend that the Korean conflict profoundly altered how the United States exercised power as a global actor, as care work helped enable departures from war-making practices of the previous decade.8 “Caring for Korea” underscores the

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8 Masuda Hajimu’s work is important to my intervention, particularly his case that the Korean conflict sparked global consciousness of the Cold War as an imminent threat. Masuda Hajimu, Cold War Crucible: The Korean Conflict and the Postwar World (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015). For more on the American-Korean relations, see Bruce Cumings, The Korean War: A History (New York: Modern Library, 2010), and his Child of Conflict: The Korean-American Relationship, 1943-1953 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983); Arissa Oh, To Save the Children of Korea: The Cold War Origins of International Adoption (California: Stanford University Press); Michael Robinson, Korea’s Twentieth-Century Odyssey: A
importance of the Korean War to Cold War America. It was a test of the efficacy of the United Nations, as well as of the U.S.’s place in—and commitment to—that institution. For the first time, both warring local governments were backed by nations with nuclear arms. Korea set a legal and cultural precedent for war not declared by Congress, and for UN police actions. As Masuda Hajimu has argued, the Korean conflict made the Cold War real and present for people around the globe, spurring anxieties that fed polarized responses.⁹ Samuel Wells’ *Fearing the Worst* argues that anxieties over the possibility of World War III spurred the U.S. and the Soviet Union to build up their military capabilities: not only did the Korean conflict take the Cold War into the realm of military action, it also had a militarizing effect on the nations involved. The U.S., Wells argues, entered a new era of militarization.¹⁰

The story of voluntary foreign aid during and following the Korean War provides a new understanding of how all this succeeded on the American side. My research showcases how U.S. leaders developed strategies for managing people’s emotions and investments in war given this new, precarious world order. Furthermore,

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⁹ Masuda Hajimu, *Cold War Crucible*.

given the vast destruction and upheaval in social relations caused by World War II, turmoil still fresh in people’s memories, foreign voluntary aid proved a vital component of homefront mobilization for limited war. At the same time that government-backed private efforts motivated Americans to work against communism by supporting U.S. involvement in Korea, they delivered a subtle message that this war need not drastically change American lives. These Korean war voluntary activities and the affinities they produced have importance far beyond that conflict, moreover, because the model they created has had consequences that span into our current moment. My research demonstrates how this formative Cold War conflict indelibly shaped the way the United States interacted with the so-called Third World in ensuing undeclared wars, and how Americans’ views of their country’s and their own duty to the world altered in the process.

“Caring for Korea” positions the homefront effort (broadly defined) in the Korean War as a vital component of the development of the Cold War. In Korea, American civilians were trained on minimizing their investment in war, a stark contrast to the expansive World War II mobilization in the previous decade.11 Ironically, this

11 There is a good deal of scholarship on the World War II homefront that contends with gender, some of which also adeptly considers race. On civilian mobilization in World War II, see Meghan K. Winchell, Good Girls, Good Food, Good Fun: The Story of USO Hostesses During World War II (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Elizabeth Escobedo, From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: The Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Megan Taylor Shockley, “We, Too, Are Americans”: African American Women in Detroit and Richmond, 1940-54 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004); Karen Anderson, Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, the Status of Women During World War II (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981). See Also, Timothy Stewart-Winter,
project displays this minimized investment through engagement with people who invested quite a lot, working overseas and sacrificing a great deal to, as they understood it, save Korea from communism. Importantly, however, the actions of those Americans abroad were voluntary and relied on willingly given small-scale contributions from other Americans to subsidize modest, albeit highly valued, state support.

Thus in my work we see a new and complex dimension to the Korean War. The mobilization explained here required Americans to forge deep emotional connections with stories about Korean suffering. Moreover, these stories required and reinforced Americans’ disdain for communism, for they positioned Moscow as the ultimate aggressor and communism as the ill that harmed helpless Koreans. The idea that anticommunism played a role in shaping Cold War ideals is by no means novel, of course. However, I show how anticommunism animated humanitarian, religious, and diplomatic moves in sometimes unexpected ways. Moreover, I show how policy makers, humanitarians, and missionaries defined communism very poorly, to productive results:

“Not A Soldier, Not a Slacker: Conscientious Objectors and Male Citizenship in the United States during the Second World War” Gender & History 19 no. 3 (November 2007).

by positioning communism as a nebulous, all-encompassing evil, any injury or societal ill could be attributed to communism’s malice.

“Caring for Korea” positions the Korean conflict as a workshop for empire in the Cold War. The U.S. experimented with Korea as a client state. The federal government and the military worked—with mixed results—to control Rhee’s regime. Rhee is a fascinating character with politics that troubled many American observers. His ardent nationalism put him at loggerheads with many people, including those who were ostensibly his allies. The consensus in the U.S. State Department was that Rhee was not the ideal collaborator for the U.S., both because of his tendency toward authoritarianism, and his recalcitrant attitude toward American leadership on policy issues. Nonetheless the U.S. supported Rhee. The U.S. also put the UN to work for itself as it provided the bulk of the funding both for military efforts and for UNKRA. Relief workers experimented too: they built programs aimed at “modernization” as well as providing care and emergency relief. And American organizations’ relations with the communities in which they worked mirrored the U.S.’s position on a national level. In Korea aid workers sought to influence the economic, cultural, and moral makeup of their in-


\[14\] This work discusses that dynamic only in how it affected American civilians’ understanding of the War and Korea. For more on the fraught diplomatic history between the United States and Syngman Rhee, see Stueck, Rethinking the Korean War (2002); David P. Fields, Foreign Friends: Syngman Rhee, American Exceptionalism, and the Division of Korea (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2019).
country organizations and communities in a way that would shape practices long after the Americans left the peninsula. That is, their aim was to build programs that would last under Korean leadership, but as trained by Americans. In Korea the U.S. government workshopped strategies for war making and for influencing other nations’ policies. At the same time, the government and voluntary organizations tried out ways of collaboration and of mobilizing civilians, as they tested approaches to relief and development program-building. They also tested out language for marketing these approaches to the American public, reaching for vocabularies of deservingness, anticommunism, and Christian and civic duty.

As this project shows, the Americans in charge of aid organizations and those who supported them acted on imagery of meek, feminized Koreans and of noble aid workers fulfilling American Christian duty. The Korean war shaped notions of American charitable engagement abroad in a manner specific to the Cold War. This led to lasting concepts of internationalism framed as saving innocent victims of communism through cooperative, multilateral voluntary projects as well as unilateral state power. At the same time, American charitable giving formed a means of international engagement steeped in the language of voluntarism, Christianity, and maternalism.

15 Though the imagery and discourse that popped up in the Korean War were highly specific to the insecurities of the era, the 1950s was not the first time Americans mobilized around notions of civic responsibility. World War I provides a useful model for thinking through how Americans got used to global war. For a history of war mobilization based on discourses of civic duty and voluntarism, see Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Same Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).
Americans could act abroad to advance American prestige while telling themselves and onlookers that they were not operating as agents of the state. The United States could spread its global power precisely because it was underpinned by that which did not look like power. Taking care of sick Koreans, housing orphans, and training widows looked to most to be Christian and charitable, not imperial. But those ties gave Americans immediate access to and influence over Korean lives and made intervention in Korea more palatable to the American public even among people who otherwise opposed the war. Thus, maternalist giving enabled hard power by not looking like empire.

American aid workers deployed medicine, education, and religion, alongside infrastructural development programs to provide relief works to Koreans. Through these gendered intimate contacts, people like the Maryknoll Sisters sustained support for war-torn Korea. Moreover, they maintained American interest in relief work there. Tender ties were, as this dissertation shows, also crucially gendered as aid workers took on maternal roles and positioned Koreans as feminized and helpless.\textsuperscript{16} This framing shows the maternalist underpinnings to the highly masculinized war and development frameworks for understanding Cold War empire.\textsuperscript{17}


\textsuperscript{17} On development, see David Ekbladh, \textit{The Great American Mission: Modernization and the Creation of an American World Order} (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010); David Engerman et al., eds., \textit{Staging}
and humanitarianism are thus vital to my conceptualization of this history. “Caring for Korea” intervenes in each of these literatures, showing how feminization of these realms of imperial contact enabled masculinized empire.18

This project contributes to literatures on twentieth-century humanitarian giving by delving into the complexities of aid and empire. As I show, aid projects relied on military networks to function. At the same time, the U.S. could not have achieved its foreign policy goals without support from civilian-led projects abroad. The historian of humanitarianism Julia Irwin has pinpointed an irony central to humanitarianism in wartime: “Rather than acting as an antithesis to conflict... humanitarian aid arguably helped to validate war by softening its horrors.”19 Irwin was referring to World War I. Humanitarian aid in the context of the Korean War, I argue, had grander stakes. War relief efforts softened not only the horrors in Korea, but also those of war in general as Korea became the testing ground for expansive American Cold War global


interventions. Irwin further distilled the tensions that have long underwritten war relief efforts: “The ostensible goal of humanitarian aid may have been the betterment of international welfare, but it could—and did—serve other agendas. It functioned variously as a form of propaganda, a means of social control, and a tool of statecraft.”

Indeed, missionary relief projects—even those carried out by people critical of American militarism, like the American Friends Service Committee—relied on military infrastructure to operate. Cooperation with the American, United Nations, and Korean militaries and governments was a part of amiable everyday project operations. What is more, those amiable relations lent relief organizations prestige, access, and a degree of publicity, and lent the United States a positive reputation even as the American military ravaged the Korean peninsula.

“Caring for Korea” thus shows the pull of U.S. empire for service-minded Americans abroad, as it highlights the ways that Americans abroad attempted to turn U.S. imperial resources to their own ends. Humanitarian work during and in the wake of the Korean war reflected the various visions of global responsibility that American aid workers—and their funders—held. Debates remain over the complacency of humanitarians and missionaries (most of the actors in this story are a bit of both) in imperial projects. Melani McAlister, David Hollinger, and Michael Barnett each provides a useful framework for working through this project. Rather than taking a decisive

20 Ibid., 763.
stance on whether Americans working abroad were independent of U.S. influence or cogs in an imperial machine (witting or not), these historians take their actors’ stated intents seriously, and weigh the contributions that those actors made to American influence. “Caring for Korea” utilizes a similar approach. I take seriously American aid workers’ theological and humanitarian beliefs. But I also pinpoint the moments when their work helped to expand American influence in Korea.21

My work illuminates from a fresh vantage point the power of religion and humanitarianism in mid-century United States: the government made more direct investment in foreign Christian war relief efforts than scholars have appreciated. This project highlights the state-religion partnerships that went beyond symbolic and material support for in-country religious formations (as in Vietnam or Pakistan). Missionaries in the field in Korea built upon six decades of missionary work there: Presbyterian missionaries had started evangelizing there in the 1880s, and Protestants quickly built churches, schools, and hospitals.22 By the time of the Korean War, Korea had the highest percentage of Christians in its population of any East Asian country.23

23 “Helping Koreans Help Themselves” Life, October 12, 1953, 48.
And vitally for aid work, Korea had an existing network of American missionaries with contacts, influence, and Korean language skills. These missionaries formed a cohort of aid workers that the U.S. and the UN relied on. This project showcases real, material state support for religious institutions as well as a systematic U.S. preference for Christian missions, which MacArthur and others assumed were best qualified both to help Koreans and to sow good will for Americans in Korea.  

As “Caring for Korea” scours the language that U.S. individuals and organizations used to describe Koreans, discourses on race continually crop up. As I demonstrate in the following chapters, American servicepeople, volunteers, and policy makers used racial language to describe the behaviors of Koreans and the conditions in which they lived. It is thus necessary to engage literature on race, militarism, and empire. The particularities of race talk varied from case to case. As many historians of the Korean War have shown, frequently American military personnel of every rank utilized racist, even vitriolic language to describe their Korean allies. British Journalist Reginald Thomson observed that many soldiers referred to all Koreans by the racial slur “g----.” American racist attitudes extended beyond language, moreover, with white.


and Black GIs sometimes acting violently toward Koreans. Still, American understandings of race did not always play out so violently. The kind of racist ideology that shows up most often among the Americans I examine is language that generalizes Korean behaviors, often in well-intentioned ways. American aid workers were apt to describe Koreans with generalizations: “Koreans are hard-working” or “Koreans are conservative,” or “Korean women are shy.” The dark side of these sorts of broad strokes positioned Koreans as backward, ignorant, or lacking leadership skills. Americans aid workers used such descriptions to make a case for Koreans’ deservingness of help. They also used them to justify ongoing American presence and influence in Korea.

On some level, this spectrum of assumptions about Koreans based on race was characteristic of imperial logics. European colonial administrators in North America justified their control of indigenous people with the logic of civilizing, and described those indigenous peoples in ways that advanced administrators’ own and home nations’ pursuits. The American military in the Philippines justified its occupation by celebrating the Philippines’ liberation from old-world colonialism (Spain), and positioning Filipinos as barbaric and in need of saving. Closer to Korea, American administrators in Japan

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26 Operating with racist assumptions about lack of capacity and trustworthiness of Koreans, in the American military it was common to see or express no distinction between enemy combatants (North Korean and Chinese soldiers) and allies (South Koreans), and importantly, to use this as cover to excuse violence toward Koreans in general. Jessie L. Kindig, “War for Peace”: Race, Empire, and the Korean War,” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Washington, 2014); Cumings, The Korean War, 14-15; Sahr Conway-Lanz, “Beyond No Gun Ri: Refugees and the United States Military in the Korean War” Diplomatic History 29, no. 1 (January 2005).

27 See, for example, Reginald Horsman, Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Anglo-Saxonism (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); On the Philippines, see Paul Kramer, The Blood of
after World War II described Japanese culture and people as in need of maturation and training to participate in capitalist democracy. Globally and in the U.S., imperial moves required justification for why the colonial power should have sway over the colonized peoples. This was not new, even where colonial powers used what we might consider “soft” imperialism.

Americans’ perspectives on Koreans, however, were complicated somewhat by the U.S.’s muddled position on the nature of the war in Korea. In Japan just a few years prior, the path from foe to occupied land to ally was surprisingly straightforward. It was easy to understand why the U.S. occupied Japan in the wake of World War II and why the U.S. positioned itself above Japanese people in terms of power: Japan was an aggressor toward the U.S. that was now defeated. Questions of who was in charge and why were, at least from the perspective of the American state, easy to answer. From this positioning, American administrators undertook the work of rehabilitating Japan, and as Naoko Shibusawa has shown, employing race and “civilizational maturity” to explain to the international world how and why Japan would be made ready to be a friend again.

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29 Shibusawa, America’s Geisha Ally.
As much as military, diplomatic, and aid workers used familiar civilizational maturity language in Korea, the circumstances were much different there. American troops returned to Korea in 1950 as both ally and adversary, and, as Cumings shows, with little capacity or concern to differentiate between North and South Koreans. It was thus never entirely clear whether the U.S. was an occupying force or support for an existing regime—the answer to such questions depended on the circumstances of the moment. From this muddled position emerged muddled language about Koreans’ behaviors. Where the project in Japan was about rehabilitating an understanding of the Japanese race to move Japan from foe to friend in Americans’ eyes, in Korea Americans placed Koreans in both categories, and thus rehabilitation utilizing a race logic was about undoing American violence, with horribly blurry categories.

Much of the humanitarian project in Korea hinged on proving to Americans that Koreans needed and deserved their help. This required dismantling some of the most overt anti-Asian sentiment in the U.S. But it also required entrenching notions that particular conditions and behaviors among Koreans were a matter of Koreans’ characteristics (in other words: they existed because of race or culture.) This latter part of the project supported the entrepreneurial pursuits of American aid workers: it explained why Koreans needed American humanitarians.

30 For North Korea the U.S. was an occupying force, yet the U.S. had quite a lot of say over the operations of the country. Indeed, the plan was never to turn North Korea over to Syngman Rhee. The U.S. even toyed with supporting a coup against Rhee in the South, an indication that the U.S. very much saw itself as in charge beyond military operations. Cumings, The Korean War: A History.
But racial hierarchy in Korea was complex beyond its contrast with American attitudes toward Japan. Korea was coming into this relationship with the U.S. after years of Japanese colonialism. The Japanese imperial model included its own racial hierarchy to which Koreans were subjected. On some level, then, the U.S. from 1945 to about 1960 was stepping into an imperial administration that Japan had set up. Americans in Korea, especially those in the military, would have been well aware of this. At the very least, many Koreans were vocal about the damage Japanese imperialism had done. While the racial hierarchy that Americans envisioned in Korea may have included some new theorizing, the condition of living under such a racial hierarchy was perfectly familiar to Koreans, so they knew how to navigate this hierarchy. GIs were apt to parrot racist and violent language about Koreans—lumping South Koreans in with North Koreans and Chinese people. But Koreans and Americans alike knew that at least in the war relief realm, American boosters needed to position Koreans as deserving allies. That shaped the tenor of race language.31

The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, as Japan conceptualized it, produced its own hierarchies through the simultaneous flattening of all Asians in terms

of race, and raising the status of people of particular national origins. At the same time that Imperial Japan advanced a narrative of a pro-Asian empire to counter European white supremacist global powers, it produced an internal hierarchy predicated on the racial superiority of Japanese people over other Asians. In their way, Americans replicated this hierarchy with South Koreans at the top. At the same time that there was something of a homogenizing of all Asians in terms of race talk, Americans also listed qualities of South Koreans as better, more deserving, and more compatible with American values than other Asians. This complex and largely implicit discourse on race colored Americans’ depictions of Koreans at every turn, even where Americans wove benevolent and affectionate narratives of their duty to help war-torn Koreans.

I use a variety of sources to showcase the projects, aims, and ideologies of the Americans who gave aid during the Korean War and after it ended. These sources include concerned citizens’ letters to presidents, secretaries of state, and religious leaders; institutional documents from missionary and aid organizations; government and United Nations policy analyses and publicity materials; and popular media and culture. By considering these materials together, my project reveals the intricate networks that connected various actors who carried out aid on vastly different scales.

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National Council of Catholic Women members raised funds in their own communities; Maryknoll Sisters fought tuberculosis outbreaks in the crowded hills around Pusan; and eight Catholic families in Southern California adopted Korean babies in 1958. All investments in helping Koreans, all connected to the Maryknoll Mission, and all requiring vastly different levels and varieties of commitment. By moving from government to publics to churches, I display the multivalent transmission of concern for Koreans, and how individuals and institutions utilized the crisis and the relief effort for their own ideological and logistical aims. Showing that a previously unappreciated array of Americans took action to help Koreans even after the fighting had stopped, “Caring for Korea” sheds fresh light on the homefront appeal of empire, and the discourses that animate people’s acceptance of imperial projects.

“Caring for Korea” proceeds in five chapters and a framing prologue. The prologue depicts in broad terms the course of the war, to show the vast need for aid it produced. This project’s primary intervention is to tell stories of people and concepts that accompanied the military trajectory of the Korean War. The course of the war, its military tactics and strategies, and the high statecraft that went along side them have been well established by other historians. Though recognition of the wide political, social, and cultural significance of the Korean War is still limited in broad

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understandings of the 20th century U.S. history, excellent histories of the war itself abound. I thus do not endeavor in my research to reconstruct a history of the course of the Korean War. Rather, in this section, I lay out for readers a broad, synthetic outline of the course of the war, emphasizing the how it created the conditions that drew in the individuals and organizations on which I focus. This section will provide context for chapters that follow.

Chapter One, “Bureaucracies of Care,” lays out the contours of the relief landscape in Korea during and following the Korean War. The chapter narrates a transition from military to civilian control over relief work in Korea, arguing that U.S. officials made this shift intentionally, and explain why and with what consequences. The discussion showcases the intricacies of relief networks and the challenges of navigating those networks. The chapter explains the importance of voluntary aid to all parties involved. Representatives of the Army, the UN and various UN agencies, and the American and Korean governments all acknowledged the need for civilian-initiated relief projects, both for their substantive and public relations contributions.

The next chapter, “The Affective Homefront: Public Opinion and Civic Engagement with Korea,” examines American civilians’ engagement with voluntary aid to Korea. Examining the marketing materials for campaigns concerned with raising funds and goods for Koreans, press clippings, and government policy and propaganda, I showcase how Americans understood and narrated their duty to help Korea. Chapter
Two also examines public opinion about the war and relief efforts through press coverage and polls, to reveal how support for the war itself and support for relief in Korea diverged. Even those who disapproved of the U.S. war effort (typically along the lines of “what does Korea have to do with us?”) had few qualms about extending voluntary relief for Koreans. Part of the explanation, this chapter shows, was the gendered language that permeated literature about Korea, and that Americans used to articulate their duty to Koreans. The feminized labor of care eased acceptance of the masculinized labor of combat.

The next three chapters are case studies that take the analysis deeper, as each examines a different organization’s on-the-ground efforts in Korea. All three organizations were Christian, though their doctrine, structure, and ties to churches varied greatly. Through these case studies I show how varied relief organizations, though engaged in similar programs, reflected unique political and humanitarian commitments that shed further light on the political and cultural moment. Each organization thus viewed its goals and its relationship to the U.S., Koreans, and the American public differently.

Chapter Three, “Catgut in God’s Hands: The Maryknoll Sisters’ Pusan Mission, 1950-1957,” showcases the Maryknoll Clinic in Pusan, in southeast South Korea. The Sisters’ mission started significantly earlier than most other civilian relief programs. They were also distinctive as a group made up entirely of Catholic women who found a
great deal of prominence and autonomy in Korea. This chapter illustrates how gendered labor operated in relief work in Korea, drawing attention in particular to the Janus-faced nature of the Sisters’ commitments: though they created a highly empowered female community (and perhaps because of that), they also adhered to the traditionalist gender hierarchy of the Church and the era. More than any other group examined in this project, the Maryknoll Sisters self-consciously and frequently spoke of how their faith animated every aspect of their relief work, producing passionate devotion to self-sacrifice in rigorous and sometimes dangerous medical work. The Sisters drew on their doctrine to demonstrate to the American public the unique intensity of the sacrifice, which also had the effect of bolstering their own prestige. Still, the Maryknoll Sisters presented their work humbly, as mere “catgut in the hands of God”—a medium through which God worked, enabling them to be self-sacrificing messengers of American goodwill. “Catgut in God’s Hands” highlights the entrepreneurial nature of relief work in Korea, as the Maryknoll Sisters leveraged their image to capture resources which allowed them to expand their mission—which in turn bolstered their image.

The following chapter, “A Small but Good Job: Quaker Service and Imperial Critique, 1950-1958,” investigates Quaker perspectives on the Korean War and relief, using the sharp contrast between Quakers and Catholics to highlight the seemingly inexorable logic of war relief. Despite their vocal anticolonial critique of U.S. involvement in Korea (animated in part by their pacifist faith), the AFSC-backed Quaker
mission to Kunsan had to operate through aid bureaucracies run by the U.S. and South Korean governments and their militaries. The AFSC’s work earned high regard from military and civilian agencies alike, the actors’ pacifist intentions notwithstanding. The chapter underscores the difficulties of navigating a complex and frequently-shifting aid network, while illuminating the distance between the aid workers’ theological and political concerns and the logistical needs and they faced on the ground. Despite the significant distance between the Quakers’ and the Maryknoll Sisters’ philosophies, they ended up doing similar work, and being similarly highly regarded. That resemblance, I conclude, underscores the challenge—and perhaps impossibility—of doing humanitarian work within a military occupation while trying to avoid strengthening or reproducing that imperial system.

Finally, Chapter Five, “‘Training Women and Girls for Democratic Living’: The YWCA and the Reconstruction of Korean Women” explains the development of the YWCA of Korea, embedded as it was in both early 20th century Protestant mission influence, and illuminates international humanitarian intervention of the post-Korean War era. The chapter explains the YWCA as an organization at once controlled by Americans and having a strong Korean identity and mission to open doors for Korean women. Exploring the ways that American intervention influenced YWCA programs in the 1950s, this chapter argues that the war both hobbled the organization and created the opportunities for the Korean YWCA to build robust programs and wide influence. This
chapter also interrogates the distinction between relief and development projects, proposing that the two were inextricably intertwined to the point of being almost indistinct, and thus showcasing how “soft” and “hard” power worked in tandem to build lasting influence abroad.

This project highlights the gendered labor of American empire. By turning attention to feminized care work aimed largely at supporting women, children, and disabled men, the dissertation highlights how care work sustained empire as well as individuals in need. It may be, I suggest, that soldiers fought, but civilians conquered.
Prologue: A War of Untold Destruction

Figure 1: Sites of American Emergency Relief in Korea. Map template from freeworldmaps.net
The Korean war may have constituted the “most intense violence of the post-45 era,” concludes historian Paul Chamberlin in comparing “the Cold War’s killing fields.”\(^1\)

It began in the early morning of June 25, 1950, when Korean People’s Army (KPA) soldiers, numbering around 75,000, crossed over the 38\(^{th}\) parallel that had divided the peninsula since 1945. The parallel itself was a recent border, devoid of a historical or social significance. The division resulted from maneuvering between the U.S. and the Soviet Union at the end of World War II. Per agreements between the two powers, American troops claimed the southern part of the peninsula from the Japanese, and Russian army did so in the North. The two met at the 38\(^{th}\) parallel and occupied their respective territories. Though not initially intended to be a permanent or meaningful boundary, governments coalesced on each side as allies of their respective occupying forces. In the North, the leftist Korean Nationalist and anti-imperial fighter Kim Il Sung ascended to power, instituting a family dynasty steeped in Kim’s isolationist brand of Marxism that has lasted 75 years and counting. In the South, the right-wing and American-educated Korean Nationalist Syngman Rhee took charge, after decades of lobbying the international community to recognize a free Korea (i.e., free from Japanese rule). Both governments, Kim’s Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea,) and Rhee’s Republic of Korea (ROK, or South Korea), formed in 1948, and claimed to be the sole legitimate Korean government. Though Moscow claimed some control over Pyongyang, and Washington had considerable influence over Seoul, both

Kim and Rhee were fairly recalcitrant toward outside influence. Nonetheless, Rhee relied on—and demanded—American investment in his war effort; and Kim ultimately received support from Moscow and Beijing.²

The opening of the war has been among the most contested parts of its history. Historians have asked who struck first, and why. In the literature written in English, the consensus has fluctuated since the 1950s, depending on the availability of sources. In his preface to The Korean War: An International History, Wada Haruki offers a succinct historiographical essay regarding the evolving debate over who started the Korean War.³ In short, Haruki finds that historians’ analyses of how the war started—and by whom—have changed over time as geopolitical developments have led to greater availability of previously classified or unavailable sources. For example, during and immediately following the war, censorship and classification policies in the U.S. worked such that writers relied heavily on first-hand accounts, as they could not get access to government documents.⁴ Declassification of documents in the 1970s led to a wave of revision as scholars mined American government records. The “opening” of China in the 1980s, the fall of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, and the subsequent availability of

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³ Wada Haruki, The Korean War: An International History, trans., Frank Baldwin, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014): 13-22. Because these questions are closely intertwined, the survey also addresses debates regarding peace talks and the armistice.

⁴ Though documents were limited, this era produced foundational texts on the war that opened up ensuing debates, such as I.F. Stone’s The Hidden History of the Korean War (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1952).
sources on the war from Beijing and Moscow, fueled further interpretations. These newly available documents allowed for greater insight into Beijing and Moscow’s roles in the war as well as perspectives on the war from Pyongyang.⁵

Given the sources available now, historians have landed on precarious consensus about the war’s start: It was the Korean People’s Army that threw the first stone, crossing the 38th parallel on June 25. South Korea, however, had provoked the DPRK to some extent through border skirmishes in the preceding year. And the United States, it now seems, had some understanding that an attack was coming from North Korea. U.S. officials allowed things to play out in an attempt to influence a war that could hopefully reunite the peninsula under a friendly regime.⁶ As for the Cold War narrative that North Korea attacked at the behest of Stalin, historians for the most part agree that Kim Il Sung and Pyongyang drove the action. Leadership over communist forces would grow more complex as the war waged on, however: China’s entry at the end of 1950 and the drawn-out peace talks from 1951 through the armistice would draw more input from Moscow and Beijing.⁷

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⁶ The extent to which the U.S. was aware of North Korea’s intentions, and the extent to which Truman’s administration wanted a war, is contested. Some state department documents at NARA support this hypothesis. It seems at the very least, the U.S. was aware in Summer 1950 that tensions in Korea were high enough to be of concern. “Summary of the Daily Meeting with the Secretary,” Department of State Memorandum of Conversation, April 5, 1950, Folder 3, Box 1, Summaries of the Secretary’s Daily Meetings, 1949-1952, General Records of the Office of the Executive Secretary, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, NARA II, College Park, MD.

What is not under debate is the deadliness of the protracted conflict that ensued, one that generated extraordinary need for humanitarian relief, particularly in a poor land that had already endured colonialism and war. The Korean People’s Army swept down swiftly through the Uijongbu corridor toward the west of the peninsula. South Korea’s Army, small and apparently ill-prepared, fell quickly. The ROK 7th Division, tasked with defending the Uijongbu corridor, which led directly to Seoul, hardly stood a chance. Nor did the ROK 2nd Division, whose reinforcing troops (from Taejon, roughly 100 miles to the South), were likewise shredded. By June 28, South Korean commanders could only find 22,000 soldiers, just over one fifth of the Army. Cumings argues that Rhee’s lack of popularity prompted mass desertion among Korean soldiers, along with poor training and lack of firepower. The rest had deserted or been killed. With the South Korean army so lacking in resources and resolve, the KPA marched steadily toward Seoul, situated about 30 miles south of the 38th parallel. By the end of the day on June 28, after three days of marching, the Korean People’s Army had captured Seoul and put Rhee’s government on the run.

The U.S. entered the war immediately. Bruce Cumings has argued that Secretary of State Dean Acheson started preparing at the United Nations before President Harry Truman could even weigh in. With American forces stationed in Japan and the State Department monitoring Korea before June 25, despite Korea taking low

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priority in security concerns, the U.S. was ready to jump in very quickly. Truman’s
decision to intervene without consulting Congress, moreover, produced a speedy
mobilization.\textsuperscript{10} The United States, as Haruki phrases it, “gained UN Security Council
resolutions on June 25 and 27 demanding that [the DPRK] end the invasion. Under cover
of these resolutions, the United States entered the conflict to save the ROK.” American
troops mobilized from Japan, using bases on the nearby American-occupied islands as
logistical support and staging grounds.\textsuperscript{11} The state department had been monitoring the
situation in Korea with interest since 1948, convinced that Moscow was pulling the
strings in North Korea and aware that South was a small and surrounded
anticommunist hold out. Moreover, as Haruki notes, the U.S. had an existing military
apparatus in Japan, and was thus prepared for quick mobilization.\textsuperscript{12} The other side of
that coin: The U.S. wished to protect its interests in Japan and its close proximity to
Korea made the North Korean invasion a threat.

Haruki’s explanation of the outbreak of the war also points to the roles of the
U.S. and the UN in the conflict. As Haruki states, the U.S. “gained” UNSC resolutions,
framing the UN as an institution where strategic maneuvers could produce resources. In
this case those resources were both material and moral, as the U.S. positioned itself as
the protector of a nation suffering under an unprovoked attack. “Under cover of these

\textsuperscript{10} Cumings, \textit{The Korean War: A History}, 11.
\textsuperscript{11} Wada Haruki, \textit{The Korean War: An International History}, 11-12.
\textsuperscript{12} Haruki, \textit{The Korean War: An International History}, 12.
resolutions,” Haruki phrases it, showing that the U.S. went to war under the auspices of these resolutions, and utilized the authority of the UN to explain its policies in Korea.\textsuperscript{13}

The U.S.’s use of the United Nations would remain vital to the war effort, as the UN granted the U.S. some contested legitimacy in its involvement in Korea. The relationship between the U.S. and the UN would face scrutiny: some criticized the U.S.’s use of the UN as cover for American imperial moves, undermining the legitimacy of the international organ. The relationship between the U.S. and the United Nations also addressed domestic concerns. The UN functioned as a means for the U.S. to assure the American public that it was not going to war with North Korea (or China or the Soviet Union, for that matter), but that it was supporting (and leading) an international effort to protect South Korea, an effort housed in a governing body outside the U.S.\textsuperscript{14}

In any case, the U.S. mobilized its troops within a matter of days, committing ground forces on June 30. United Nations Security Council Resolution 82 put American General Douglas MacArthur in charge of all military operations in Korea. Assessing the war, MacArthur initially requested one American Regimental Combat Team, then noting the widespread desertion from the ROKA, adjusted his ask to a minimum of thirty thousand American Soldiers by early July.\textsuperscript{15} The U.S. ultimately

\textsuperscript{13} Haruki, \textit{the Korean War: An International History}, 12.

\textsuperscript{14} Chamberlin quotes General Omar Bradley on this issue: “The U.S. intervention in Korea would take place...‘under the guise of aid to the UN.’” \textit{The Cold War’s Killing Fields}, 121.

\textsuperscript{15} Cumings, \textit{The Korean War: A History}, 15.
committed nearly 1.8 million troops in-theater to the Korean War, organized under United Nations Unified Command (UNC).  

Meanwhile, North Korean Forces were well-trained and well-organized; they efficiently marched south through the peninsula, sending civilians scrambling across the land. Photographer David Douglas Duncan described Koreans scurrying. His own movement was slowed by “hordes of refugees funneling south,” as “it seemed as though the entire population was afoot under cover of darkness.” Syngman Rhee and his government, which had retreated from Seoul on June 28, fled first to Taejon then to Pusan, a port city in the southeast corner of the peninsula. As Rhee and the ROKA headed southeast, Koreans suffered: The Army and National Police executed between 100 thousand and 200 thousand political prisoners as Rhee evacuated Seoul, a measure against dissidents joining communist forces. The presence of leftists in South Korea had troubled Rhee’s presidency as they undermined his claims that North Korean communists were Soviet dupes, and that Koreans outright rejected communism. Rhee had been in the practice of detaining political dissidents. Now he executed them rather than risking their joining the North’s cause. As North Korean forces rolled into Seoul,


17 Many Korean People’s Army soldiers had recent experience fighting in the Chinese civil war, and the KPA had around 150 tanks and 130 aircrafts bought or otherwise acquired from Moscow and Beijing in the previous two years. Cumings, The Korean War: A History, 6.


they, in turn, “launched a hunt for reactionaries.”

Refugees from Seoul and around the country fled south and likewise faced starvation and injury as they dodged North Korean troops and “American aircraft hunting for targets in Communist-controlled territory.”

With the support of UN forces, Rhee and the ROKA made their stand in Pusan. The U.S. and its allies set up a defensive line in the high ground surrounding Pusan at the end of July. Though the KPA had run roughshod over Korea, UN forces now settled into a strategically strong position from which MacArthur made plans for counter-maneuvers. Though pushed to the farthest reaches of the peninsula, the UN and ROKA had protected waters to their backs, and fortifiable high ground in the perimeter. The KPA, meanwhile, was stretched, its supply and troop lines reaching for hundreds of miles across the peninsula.

The Battle of Pusan Perimeter, which lasted until MacArthur’s Inchon landing in mid-September, ravaged Pusan and the southeast of the country. Refugees flocked to Pusan by the hundreds of thousands as its surrounding land was ruined by prolonged siege. By 1951, Pusan was South Korea’s most stable region. It was also overcrowded and severely strained for resources and infrastructure. Evangelist Billy Graham described the city nearly two years later, still in terrible disrepair: “On the

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20 Chamberlin, The Cold War’s Killing Fields, 128.
21 Chamberlin, The Cold War’s Killing Fields, 128.
22 Chamberlin, The Cold War’s Killing Fields, 129.
streets you hear no laughter. Lepers mingle with the crowds calling for alms. Disease is rampant. I saw children walking through the streets wearing nothing but a tattered piece of burlap and carrying a can, begging for food.”

Though UN forces managed to establish a strong perimeter with some strategic victories, they needed a maneuver to flank the KPA and to get off the back foot. MacArthur orchestrated just such a move with his landing at Incheon. Incheon, north of the perimeter and more than 100 miles behind North Korean lines, just west of Seoul, proved a nice landing spot for 47,000 American and Korean troops. MacArthur landed amphibiously and was able to start a counter-attack against the KPA immediately. The battle to take Incheon proved relatively light; the fighting, however, flattened Incheon almost entirely. UN forces soon had North Korean troops on the run—or so it seemed.

As fall wore on, victory appeared to be within MacArthur’s grasp. But with the Korean People’s Army retreating north, Truman grappled with the question of what to do about the 38th parallel. This raised further questions over the nature of the war. Was the North Korean invasion in June just that, and the U.S. entry into the war the defense of a sovereign Republic of Korea? If so, then the defense of South Korea, it would stand to reason, would end at the 38th parallel, with the North Koreans back in their own territory. But many Koreans, North and South, had argued that the 38th parallel was an arbitrary and false division of a nation that was meant to be united. If this was the case,

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24 Graham, a staunch anticommunist, framed this and other observations about Korea as an indictment of communist godlessness that inflicted suffering on the masses of Korea. David R. Swartz, Facing West: American Evangelicals in an Age of World Christianity (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 38.

25 Chamberlin, The Cold War’s Killing Fields, 133.
then South Korea and its allies had a reasonable motive for continuing north of the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel in an effort to reunite the peninsula.\textsuperscript{26} Ultimately Truman and MacArthur opted for the latter.\textsuperscript{27}

UN forces recaptured Seoul on September 25. They chased the KPA north over the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel by October 1, 1950. They captured Pyongyang on October 19. All the while, civilians braced themselves against waves of troops, North Korean and UN, on the chase northward. In 1951, \textit{Life} photographer Michael Rougier, explaining the sad life of orphan Kan Koo Ri, described how moving battle lines tore apart Korean communities. “Artillery and probing patrols from both sides destroyed [Kang’s] village, and the people living there...were left with only the charred remains of their homes.”\textsuperscript{28}

On top of the destruction from all these movements, Koreans contended with authorities hostile to basically all civilians. South Korean police took to executing people accused of aiding Communists. For their part, American troops were suspicious of every Korean,

\textsuperscript{26}Many Koreans favored this understanding. However, it troubled the legitimacy of U.S./UN intervention in the peninsula. If the North’s invasion was indeed an effort of one political entity to take control of one nation, then there was no border crossed on June 25, so why would the U.S. have gotten involved? As with so many narratives of the Korean War, the remedy, at least in relaying the story to the American public, lay in positioning North Koreans’ actions as illegitimate, and South Koreans’ (very similar) actions as legitimate. This kind of gymnastics would take place again and again: excusing (or ignoring) South Korean atrocities against civilians and POWs, while condemning North Koreans’. Cumings, \textit{The Korean War: A History}.

\textsuperscript{27}Truman signed NSC-81 on September 11, endorsing American policy for Korea that officially sanctioned a reunited and independent Korea—and set the stage for MacArthur to escalate the war north of the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel. Chamberlin, \textit{The Cold War’s Killing Fields}, 137.

alleging that anyone could be a spy: atrocities proceeded as they had in the summer.29

North Koreans did their share as well—KPA forces executed people they deemed reactionaries as UN troops fell on Pyongyang in October. South Korea’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission found 1,222 incidents of mass killings during the war.30

As KPA troops scurried north, MacArthur, the U.S., and the UN made plans for what they thought was the war’s eminent end. In October the General Assembly approved the creation of the UN Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea (UNCURK), tasked with planning a system for administering a new government for the entirety of Korea. Whether the peninsula should be reunited under Rhee’s administration remained an open question. The Rehabilitation side of the Commission was intended to support the rebuilding of Korean infrastructure. On December 1, The General Assembly approved the creation of the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency (UNKRA), intended to support infrastructure building, create long-term plans for economic and industrial development, and administer emergency relief to some 30 million Koreans.31 In this first phase of the war, 111,000 Koreans had died, 106,000 were

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wounded, and an additional 57,000 missing. More than 500,000 homes were damaged or destroyed.\footnote{Cumings, \textit{The Korean War}, 21.}

But the UN was too hasty in anticipating the war’s end. As soon as MacArthur crossed the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel, Kim, Mao, and Stalin had started planning for China’s entry into the war. When the U.S. initially got involved in June 1950, the Truman administration anticipated that neither Beijing nor Moscow would want to get involved directly. They also assessed, however, that the U.S. should proceed carefully so as to not provoke Chinese or Soviet mobilization. The UN’s invasion of the north constituted enough of a threat to North Korea (and to China) that Mao committed the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army, consisting of 250,000 soldiers who began entering the fray in November.\footnote{Chamberlin, \textit{The Cold War’s Killing Fields}, 141.}

Though some skirmishes predated them, KPA and PVA attacks began in earnest on November 27. The UN forces, stretched across the whole peninsula and far from their supply bases in Pusan, were easy targets. Historians question to whether the KPA retreat had always been strategic. Some PRC state documents and some historians suggest that the KPA intended to draw the UN forces north to stretch out their supply lines before Chinese soldiers joined the fight.\footnote{Chamberlin, \textit{The Cold War’s Killing Fields}, 142-43; Cumings, 29-25.} Whether or not that had been the plan since the start of MacArthur’s counterattack, it worked now—Chinese and North
Korean forces shredded thin UN lines. The U.S. fatalities alone from November 1 to mid-December amounted to nearly 7,000.35

By the start of December, MacArthur’s forces turned tail and headed south again. North Korean and Chinese forces retook Pyongyang on December 6, 1950. The Korean People’s army chased the UN troops back over the 38th parallel and were poised to take Seoul by the New Year. This was the third time in six months the once-bustling, modern capital city had been taken. Invasions from both sides destroyed buildings, roads, and infrastructure in Seoul. The seat of the Republic of Korea was in shambles. The North was devastated as well—as soon as UN forces began heading south, MacArthur wrought vengeance with intense aerial bombing that targeted population centers, industry, infrastructure, and agriculture. He ordered troops to destroy factories, villages, and cities from the Manchurian border into South Korea.36

The KPA, with the aid of the PVA, advanced south past Seoul until commander of the Eighth Army General Matthew Ridgway halted their progress south of the capital at the end of January 1951. UN troops turned around the North Korean forces once again, recapturing Seoul in Mid-March. In this counter-offensive, UN forces managed to cross the 38th parallel once more, though very briefly. Stopped in the North,

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36 Cumings, The Korean War, 29-30; Chamberlin, 146. At the time, observers did not categorize MacArthur’s policies as criminal. South Korea’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, established in 2005, has identified and publicized a number of atrocities under South Korean, North Korean, and American leadership. The Commission’s investigations, however, have not attended to American actions in North Korea. See Bruce Cumings, The Korean War: A History, 172-178.
the allied forces settled in around what is now the demilitarized zone. As the movement all but stopped, the wanton killing continued. The fighting would remain in that zone from Spring 1951 until July 1953 with only minimal fluctuations in battle lines. During this period of “static” warfare, more than 12,000 U.S. forces were killed in action.\textsuperscript{37}

With fighting settling in near the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel, life in South Korea settled down somewhat. The country now faced incredible devastation, displacement of people, and political upheaval. Two million people were displaced and hundreds of thousands of buildings destroyed. In 1952 Syngman Rhee arrested and intimidated his political opponents to amend the constitution order to swing the presidential election in his favor. The U.S. tacitly backed Rhee’s moves in favor of keeping a known ally in power.\textsuperscript{38} The capital city had changed hands four times in nine months. But at the very least, armies were not actively fighting across the land. With tensions still very high and the country still actively at war, in South Korea rebuilding could start.

Amidst the shifting terrain of the War, some policy changes shaped conversations about Korea at home in the U.S. Most importantly, President Truman relieved General MacArthur of his duty as commander of UN forces on April 9, 1951. Truman was reacting MacArthur’s fervor for the nuclear option, his apparent desire to


\textsuperscript{38} Stueck, Rethinking the Korean War, 196-200.
wage a full-scale war against China, and public statements that the president considered insubordinate. These made MacArthur too much of a loose cannon in the context of Truman’s desire to not broaden the war further.\textsuperscript{39} Thus General Matthew Ridgway, previously the commander of the 8\textsuperscript{th} Army, responsible for the success in routing the North Koreans’ second advance in the previous months, replaced MacArthur. Under Ridgway little changed in terms of the emergency relief landscape, except that he injected a sense of stability to diplomatic and military proceedings. At the very least, he seemed less eager to expand the war than MacArthur had been. Ridgway was open to keeping the war contained, encouraging some stability that allowed a reprieve for Koreans. Moreover, as William Stueck has suggested, the United Nations and Truman vested Ridgway with less unilateral authority than his predecessor, requiring the new commander to seek guidance from the Joint Chiefs of Staff regarding strategy, especially in maneuvers against China.\textsuperscript{40}

MacArthur’s dismissal, though it eased the United States’ relations with the United Nations, damaged Truman’s already dicey approval at home. It did not help that MacArthur had political aspirations of his own, and that he made his perspectives on American involvement widely known after his dismissal. In May 1951, MacArthur testified before the Senate Armed Services Foreign Relations Committee, accusing the U.S.’s allies of not carrying their weight in Korea, and of being too soft on communism.

\textsuperscript{39} Stueck, Rethinking the Korean War.

\textsuperscript{40} Stueck, Rethinking the Korean War, 132.
MacArthur’s remarks fomented tension between the U.S. and the United Nations, as much of the American public (and Congress) sought a stauncher position against China than that of the UN, which wanted to contain the breadth of the war. MacArthur’s remarks put Truman in the position of having to defend a war that was considered at once too much of a burden on American investment, and too restricted by multilateral policy.

The Korean War immediately affected domestic politics. The tension between Truman and MacArthur would follow both men’s political careers: facing blame for an unpopular war and ire from conservatives for dismissing MacArthur, as well as competitors within his own party, Truman announced his intention not to seek reelection in March 1952. For his part, MacArthur attempted to ride his popularity among militarists to a spot in the Whitehouse: he made a brief run for the GOP nomination in 1952. Republicans opted for the more-moderate (and less controversial) Eisenhower, who trounced Adlai Stevenson in the general election. Eisenhower ran on a platform of ending the Korean War, a promise upon which he mostly delivered with the armistice in July 1953.

After the battle lines settled in around what is now the Demilitarized Zone in Spring 1951, UN forces carried on their intense bombing campaign, wreaking continual

\[\text{41} \text{ Stueck, } \text{Rethinking the Korean War, 132-134.}\]

havoc. The allied forces dominated the skies for the entirety of the war. UN planes dropped 635,000 tons of bombs and 32,000 tons of napalm. Bombing campaigns destroyed North Korea’s Cities, including leveling 75 percent of Pyongyang, and devastating North Korea’s infrastructure, cities, and agriculture. Because “Caring for Korea” focuses on American relief efforts, all the projects examined herein were designed to address destruction in South Korea, even as North Korea was arguably hit much worse. But American efforts to garner empathy for South Koreans necessitated the elision of the destruction in the North and the simultaneous assertion that North Korea (and by extension, Beijing and Moscow) was responsible for all the war’s destruction.43

In South Korea the battle moved away from civilian centers, but still took extracted a heavy price: along the frontlines weaved a network of trenches and foxholes. While Americans pummeled North Korean and Chinese forces with airstrikes, the KPA and PVA waged bloody human-wave attacks. The war thus became one of attrition, draining troops and arms on both sides, with little to show for the losses.44

Once battle lines settled, it became apparent that neither side was likely to conquer the whole peninsula. In June 1951, Kim I Sung, in consultation with Mao and Stalin, approved of peace talks that accepted the 38th parallel—that is, creating peace terms that kept Korea divided. About the same time, American Secretary of State Dean Acheson indicated that the U.S. would agree to such an arrangement. But Syngman Rhee proved a barrier to peace talks: The South Korean president openly campaigned

43 Chamberlin, The Cold War’s Killing Fields, 146.
44 Chamberlin, The Cold War’s Killing Fields, 154.
for continued—and escalated—fighting, not wishing to accept a 38th parallel division and not believing a peace between North and South could hold. Before talks could even begin in July, Rhee made a number of public demands that were utterly unachievable: total disarmament of North Korea; withdrawal of all Chinese troops; and a UN guarantee that third parties would not assist North Korea in the future. Rhee’s demonstrated unwillingness to negotiate set the tone for two years of tense talks—with so many parties involved, finding the conditions for all parties involved to agree to the terms of negotiation—let alone the terms of a peace—proved a mighty task.

Peace talks carried on in stops and starts for two years. Both sides fought hard over every small detail, both out of honest conviction and out of an awareness of the conflict’s ties to larger Cold War stakes. From the American perspective, armistice in Korea, some generals reasoned, could signal a lack of conviction in fighting communism if the U.S. gave up its current hold on the peninsula. Ridgway worried that demobilization in Korea could lead to demilitarization of American policy, resulting in what he considered inadequate preparedness for further wars against communism. Moreover, if the U.S. and its allies no longer engaged Chinese troops in Korea, what resources would that free up for Beijing to shift to supporting communist struggle

45 William Stueck, Rethinking the Korean War, 141.

elsewhere in Asia? North Korea (and Beijing and the Soviet Union, insofar as they had
Kim Il Sung’s ear) worried about the same concerns in reverse. And both sides held a
deep anxiety that if they entered a peace and demobilized their military in the slightest,
the other side would take that as an opportunity to ramp up aggression again. Thus,
even as the U.S., the Soviet Union, PRC, and North and South Korea all sought an exit
from the quagmire this war had become, each party involved had some impetus not to
seek a lasting armistice—and thus reason not to negotiate in good faith.48

Negotiations took such a long time in part because both sides dug in on
ideological and political claims. More than once North Korea claimed that UN forces
engaged in activity that violated global norms of the conduct of war: in September 1951,
Pyongyang and its allies left the bargaining table over claims that UN forces had
bombed the region in which negotiations took place—a claim UNC denied, and one
widely disbelieved among Americans.49 In Spring 1952, as negotiators haggled over
issues of demilitarization and prisoner of war exchange, North Korea levied claims that
UN forces had used biological warfare. UNC roundly denied these claims, as did huge

47 Vietnam was at the top of strategists’ minds: Lieutenant General O.P. Weyland, commander of U.S. air
forces, voiced concerns that if China were not engaged in Korea, Beijing could turn its focus—and its
resources—to supporting Ho Chi Minh’s revolutionary forces against the French. The stakes of escalation
and de-escalation in Korea were thus very much intertwined with concerns over Vietnam. Korea in this way
served as a front, drawing resources and energy from the south, where Ho Chi Minh was poised both to
strike a blow for communism and against European empire. Stueck, Rethinking the Korean War, 145-147.

48 Stueck, Rethinking the Korean War, 145-147.

49 Events quickly proved that such conduct was not outside the realm of possibility—the following month,
UN aerial bombing in the negotiation zone (the village of Panmunjom, outside Kaesong) resulted in damage
to several buildings and the death of a twelve-year-old boy. UNC admitted to this misstep and reentered
talks somewhat chastened. Stueck, Rethinking the Korean War, 154-159.
parts of the international community. Nonetheless the claims entered a place of
prominence in Soviet Bloc propaganda.50 These claims of egregious conduct raised an
issue fundamental to peace negotiations: there was no truly neutral party to oversee
talks. The United Nations, ostensibly the international organ for global diplomacy, had
cast its lot with South Korea and the U.S. in 1950. North Korea and its allies thus
advanced a narrative that they could not get fair treatment on the international stage.
Moreover, Americans’ decisive rejections of North Korea’s claims betrayed U.S. failure
to imagine North Koreans’ suffering, unless narratives could pin that suffering on
communism.51

The agenda item that drew out the war the longest was the issue of prisoners of
war. UN forces in 1951 held somewhere between 150 and 180 thousand prisoners of war;
Communist forces had in their custody a mere 11,559.52 Based on both the imbalance in
numbers, and ideological commitment to individual choice (at least in framing the issue
before the global community), UNC sought a POW exchange agreement that allowed
only for voluntary repatriation. Those POWs who did not wish to return to North Korea
or China for fear of execution would remain in South Korea or go to Taiwan,
respectively. For both practical and ideological reasons, this proposed policy was

50 Stueck, Rethinking the Korean War, 167; Haruki, The Korean War: An International History, 15; As Haruki
notes, most historians do not give much weight to the biological warfare allegations, though they note that it
was an important propaganda tool for the Communists. See, for example, Conrad C. Crane, “Chemical and
Biological Warfare During the Korean War: Rhetoric and Reality” Asian Perspective 3 (2001): 61-83. For an
account that urges readers to take the allegations seriously, see Gavan McCormack, Cold War, Hot War: An
Australian Perspective on the Korean War (Sydney, NSW: Hale & Iremonger, 1983).

51 Stueck, Rethinking the Korean War; Susie Woo, Framed by War (2019).

52 Stueck, Rethinking the Korean War, 162.
completely unacceptable to North Korea and China. Both sides dug in their heels, and eventually agreed to having a neutral committee vet POWS for repatriation. But the maneuvering over particularities of this agreement dragged on for more than eighteen months, from November 1951 to July 1953. All the while communist forces took small gains in the battle front through bolstering their ground forces, and the UN continued its devastating bombing campaign.\(^5\)

Ultimately the armistice, signed July 27, 1953, came about a result of weariness at the ever-climbing cost of the war in money and lives, and from pressure from the international community. By the end of 1951, the UN had grown wary of U.S. military leadership in Korea, and enforced a hard line against expanding the war.\(^5\) On the communist side, Stalin’s death in March 1953 sped North Korea’s race toward an armistice as chaos in the new Soviet government suggested a slackening in support for the war was coming. Though Americans disagreed on the manner of ending the war (the GOP backed a policy of ending the conflict by expanding it), the American public had grown weary and demanded an end—a demand manifested in Eisenhower’s decisive victory in the presidential election of 1952. These pressures resulted in a rocky armistice that has, notwithstanding incredible enduring antipathy between the parties to it, endured for nearly seven decades.

\(^{53}\) Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War*, 143-181.

\(^{54}\) William Stueck argues that Eisenhower’s ascent marked a shift in U.S. posture toward multilateralism. Though Eisenhower ultimately proved amenable to N.A.T.O., the President tested the degree to which the U.S. had to fall in line with UN policy. At the end of the Korean War, Eisenhower issued some bold statements threatening wide escalation should North Korea violate the ceasefire—a policy with which the UN was uncomfortable, but ultimately backed. This underlines a long-term pattern: the U.S. has shown little use for multilateralism when it feels the UN is not backing its interest. Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War*, 171.
All told, the war laid waste to both the North and South: it damaged populations, land, infrastructure, industry, and basic facilities of all kinds. Chamberlin captured the human toll:

The fighting unleashed perhaps the most intense violence of the post-1945 era, killing more than three million people (equivalent to 10 percent of the peninsula’s population) in the space of three years. Both sides slaughtered civilians by the thousands and committed vicious atrocities. . . . Tens of thousands of infantry were killed in human-wave attacks, urban and trench warfare, long campaigns, and bloody retreats that stretched up and down the length of the Korean Peninsula. Seoul, seat of the South Korean Government, was transformed from a bustling capital to a maze of smoking ruins. Three years of brutal combat and aerial bombing wiped dozens of towns and villages off the map.”55

Koreans suffered over two million civilian casualties, and nearly as many people displaced. Those who survived roamed in search of shelter, causing further strain on cities that had already been damaged (like Seoul), and or drained by the influx of military activity (like Pusan). Aid workers and the United Nations faced a huge refugee crisis, as two million Koreans fled across

55 Chamberlin, The Cold War’s Killing Fields, 105.
the border between North and South, and many more who were internally

displaced, scampered from wrecked villages. Overrun refugee camps hosted
displaced Koreans in “squalid” conditions, rampant with outbreaks of
communicable diseases.56

These were the conditions that relief efforts in Korea had to address. The
peninsula was torn apart by war, then the strain of a tenuous peace. Into this chaos
surged hundreds of aid workers for all kinds of organizations, seeking to make a
difference, and to bolster the reputations of their own institutions. The war made it hard
for the Americans to do their work in Korea—the sheer scale of devastation, the
breakdown in communication, logistics, and available labor all loomed as obstacles. But,
as the following chapters illustrate, it also provided opportunities—to build institutions,
to spread cultural, spiritual, and political influence, and to reshape notions of what both
American and Korean life should be.

56 Chamberlin, The Cold War’s Killing Fields, 128.
1. Bureaucracies of Care: Laying the Groundwork for Humanitarian Intervention in Korea

Four months of fighting had taken its toll on Korea. Seoul had borne the brunt of two invasions, from the Korean People’s Army in July, and re-capture by UN forces in September. Rural regions along the 38th parallel had been a battle ground, with homes and crops destroyed and thousands of Koreans dead or on the move to more stable areas. Pusan, which had held out against North Korea’s attack, was overcrowded with refugees fleeing hotter fighting zones, and the surrounding areas devastated by nearly two months of siege.¹

With dreams of victory yet knowledge of grave devastation on their minds, the United Nations General Assembly authorized resolution 410(V), creating the Korean Reconstruction Agency on December 1, 1950. UN policymakers imagined the agency in the fall of 1950 with the task of rebuilding industry and infrastructure in the peninsula. Moreover, UNKRA would hold some responsibility for taking the civilian population’s emergency needs out of the hands of the U.S.-led military and putting it in the hands of civilian, multilateral UN management.² But by the time the General Assembly voted to

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support a multi-million-dollar reconstruction project, the dream of a UN victory and a unified Korean peninsula was already dying.

Already when the General Assembly approved UNKRA, Chinese troops were streaming across the Yalu River, and North Korean leadership mounting their counter-attack. By the year’s end the Korean People’s Army had UN forces on the run, recapturing Seoul in January 1951. The American-led UN forces managed to fend off this attack and push fighting back toward the 38th parallel by March, where it would remain until July 1953.³

The necessity for emergency relief mounted: Seoul had changed hands four times in nine months, and most of the central part of the peninsula had withstood multiple waves of invading and countering militaries. But UNKRA was designed in anticipation of the end of the war. A war which now was not ending. Indeed, the agency would not start its work until 180 days after the cessation of hostilities.⁴ As fighting continued, from Fall 1950 to Summer 1953, there arose a patchwork of emergency relief and rebuilding efforts as the military and civilian agencies shared responsibility for damaged Korean populations and infrastructure. What resulted was a muddled and on-the-fly network of bureaucratic measures designed to care for the languishing population of Korea. This


⁴ UN development projects did not start on the ground in Korea until this time, January 1954. UNKRA did, however, facilitate voluntary organizations and missions’ work in Korea earlier. “About the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency,” United Nations Archives and Records Management Section, https://archives.un.org/content/united-nations-korean-reconstruction-agency-unkra.
chapter explores that network, and how it informed American sensibilities regarding responsibility to participate in international relief initiatives.

This chapter lays the groundwork for the rest of the study by demonstrating how the U.S. Military, at the helm of the United Nations Unified Command (UNC), and the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency (UNKRA), established the networks, infrastructure, and practices of aid-giving, from collecting and providing relief materials to mission building. Each agency made ad hoc choices about how and by whom aid work could be done, depending on its own institutional priorities. From 1950 to 1953, the American generals who led UNC tightly restricted the autonomy of civilian aid agencies, claiming a need for utter control over international workers and resources for the sake of military and operational security.\(^5\)

Showing how military and international agencies shared power in Korea, the chapter argues that authorities there tended to value voluntary agencies as a means to offload responsibility for relief work, freeing up resources for government agencies to focus on military and development priorities they valued more highly. I find that agencies established complicated bureaucracies that nonetheless encouraged

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\(^5\) Douglas MacArthur led UN forces from 1950 until President Truman relieved him of his duty in April 1951. Matthew Ridgway, previously the commander of the Eight Army, succeeded MacArthur. When Ridgway took over Eisenhower’s position as Supreme Allied Commander of Europe in May 1952, General Mark Clark ascended to Commander of UN forces in Korea. Neither Ridgway nor Clark had MacArthur’s reputation for being uncompromising. Nonetheless, the generals that came after MacArthur maintained similar restrictions on civilian aid work.
participation from American voluntary organizations even as bureaucracies were exceedingly difficult to navigate. Establishing context for later chapters’ case studies regarding how voluntary agencies worked within these bureaucracies, I intervene in literature that tends to value the impact of American intervention in Korea for its long-term implications for industrial development. I further find that Americans engendered hegemony through military, diplomatic, and humanitarian approaches, each relying on the other to operate. Bureaucracies of care proved vital to maintaining harder forms of power, just as those harder forms of power built and relied on bureaucracies of care.

United Nations Unified Command under General MacArthur initially oversaw civilian relief projects in Korea as a means of protecting operational security. Military activities that addressed concerns over the security of civilian populations stemmed from anxieties left over from the Second World War. World War II had raised questions of how militaries should interact with large civilian populations. It also sparked in-
depth and highly-visible conversations about the kinds of protections governments and militaries owe to civilian populations. In 1943, the War Department created the Civil Affairs Division, whose job was to deal with questions about how the U.S. military should manage civilian populations. And in 1949, the fourth new Geneva Convention introduced “new rules for the treatment of civilian populations during times of war.”

The young Civil Affairs Division and the new Geneva conventions influenced how the Army handled civilians in Korea. Still, as historian Sahr Conway-Lance put it, “the U.S. military’s reaction to the challenge of managing civilian populations during combat would follow a similar pattern [to World War II] in the Korean War, of implementing movement restrictions, authorizing lethal force against refugees at times, and building an organizational infrastructure to provide for civilians during the war.”

In Korea the U.S. Army’s concern with controlling civilian populations stemmed from worries about belligerent infiltration. In Italy during World War II, the advancing Allies were concerned with Italian refugees’ movements: large numbers of mobile civilians posed a threat to orderly troop movements and also raised suspicions about spies embedded within roving groups of civilians. Thus, Army command established harsh protocols controlling Italian civilians’ movements near battle lines. In Korea, the

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Eighth Army had similar concerns as fluctuations in battle lines frequently drove waves of displaced civilians into combat zones.\textsuperscript{10}

World War II and its aftermath laid bare the inherent tensions in the Army’s newfound responsibilities to civilians. On one hand, the widespread destruction spurred military policy that was conscientious of how war uprooted and destroyed civilian lives, and that sought to mitigate some of that damage. On the other hand, the military’s priority in Korea was always immediate security concerns. The military failed to strike a good balance between their longing to provide for Korean civilians in the interest of sowing good will, and guarding their position against espionage or sneak attack. That failure led to tragedies like the massacre near No Gun Ri, where American troops opened fire on hundreds of Korean civilians.\textsuperscript{11}

Korea was a testing ground for emerging and inconsistent war relief priorities. If we consider Korea in the context of ongoing global recovery from World War II, we can see a trajectory of how and why the U.S. military took civilian populations’ needs into account and the complexity of the relationship of the U.S. military to Korean civilians. At the same time that the Army exercised near unilateral control over projects geared toward providing relief for Korean civilians, the U.S. military was highly suspicious of Korean civilians. This perhaps helps explain the stops-and-starts approach to civilian

\textsuperscript{10} Conway-Lanz, “Beyond No Gun Ri: Refugees and the United States in the Korean War,” 52.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 49.
responsibility for relief in Korea: if organizations over which the Army did not have control were responsible for taking care of Korean civilian populations, then North Korean spies (and South Koreans not amenable to American control over the peninsula) might slip through the cracks and threaten security. On the one hand, having voluntary agencies take over relief projects freed up army resources and personnel at relatively low cost to the United States. On the other hand, relinquishing control over relief projects meant losing some control over Korean civilian populations. The UNC mitigated some of this risk by fostering close relationships with voluntary relief missions amenable to military action on the peninsula.

Military control of civilian populations—which resulted in situations like No Gun Ri—may have worked against long-term (and even short term) American interests insofar as it may have given Koreans a negative view of American intervention. Furthermore, as censorship practices did not start immediately in Korea, Americans at

Figure 2: GIs observe "plodding refugees." *Life*, August 29, 1955, 79.
home had access to stories about servicemen’s bad behavior. These were not helpful in the federal government’s uphill battle to engender positive opinion regarding the war. Implementation of voluntary aid programs thus sought to cultivate some goodwill toward U.S. intervention among American and Korean civilians alike.

From the start of the war on June 25, 1950, policy makers and military powers struggled to articulate overlapping jurisdictions and chains of command. The issue of who was in charge in the military, ostensibly settled by the July 7 Security Council decision naming General Douglas MacArthur commander in chief of UN Unified Command, did not automatically solve the question of who would be in charge of managing Korea’s civilian population. Some contenders, like the Red Cross, seemed obvious, but raised questions over what kind of power and responsibilities such organizations could yield. These jurisdictional issues were compounded by military command’s resistance to some forms of civilian cooperation. In any case, the chaos of the opening months of the war both necessitated relief efforts and made them incredibly difficult to coordinate. The lack of stability and of clear standards for international cooperation would haunt relief efforts in Korea through the end of the decade.

12 Regarding vice among American troops see Susie Woo, Framed by War, 37. For American military aggression against Korean civilians, including massacres, see Chamberlin, The Cold War’s Killing Fields, 126-27; Cumings, The Korean War: A History.

13 Lyons, Military Policy and Economic Aid, 46-47; Regarding ICRC history and procedures, see David P. Forsythe, The Humanitarians: The International Committee of the Red Cross (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
The outbreak of the Korean War naturally wrought considerable chaos, which created long-standing fraught conditions for ministering to Korea’s civilian populations. There was the war itself, of course, which killed and displaced tens of thousands of Koreans as soon as it began. Troop movements and bombing ruined the physical landscape and industrial and agricultural infrastructure. Politically and culturally infrastructure suffered as well, as the ROK government fled the South as North Korea forces advanced, and was not in a position to tend to civilian needs. Military and civilian leaders from around the globe scrambled to implement some order. Though the need for relief was immediately apparent, who should administer relief and how were huge questions. Far from being anomalous, however, the opening of the war portended ongoing dynamics in South Korea as various governmental, international, military, and charitable institutions vied for input and autonomy in deciding Korea’s future and helping its people.

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15 A State Department white paper from July instructed Ambassador John J. Muccio to “hold the Korean government physically together” should they be evacuated to Japan. The U.S. recognized that the Korean government barely had any capacity to function, and was worried that should North Korean forces advance any further, the ROK government might literally cease to exist. With the Korean government functionally out of the equation, the question of who should take charge of keeping civilians in order and cared for fell to others. Department of State “Memorandum of Conversation,” July 27, 1950, File 1, Box 1, Summaries of the Secretary’s Daily Meetings, 1949-52, General Records of the Office of the Executive Secretary, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, MD.
The resolution putting MacArthur in charge in early July offered some chain-of-command clarity to the chaos in Korea. But it did little to clarify how Koreans would be cared for.\(^{16}\) During the opening month of the war, aid efforts were a mess of confusion and on-the-fly decisions. Immediately after the war began, American Red Cross representatives consulted with the Korean Embassy, who, in cooperation with the ARC on the behalf of the Korean Red Cross, sent an appeal for assistance to the League of Red Cross Societies at Geneva. That appeal did not specify what sort of materials and assistance were needed, and indeed it made it clear that neither the American nor the Korean Red Cross had sound knowledge of the damage in Korea, or what it would take to provide relief. Nonetheless, the Canadian Red Cross extended an offer of $10,000 in supplies.\(^{17}\) But the ARC did not only take charge of appeals for help from other Red Cross members: the organization also attempted to assume leadership in the relief realm. The ARC advised the Korean Embassy to hold off on accepting donations except of money until they could carry out an investigation of what precisely was needed. Furthermore, the ARC advised the Korean Embassy to decline assistance offers until a system for transportation, storage, and administration could be established. Pursuing such a system, the ARC attempted contact with MacArthur to inquire about what was


needed, and how they could get it to Korea.\textsuperscript{18} The lack of structure in aid efforts at the war’s start was widely known. Though interested parties (like the Red Cross, as well as the AFSC, and CARE) were obviously aware of the need for emergency action, it does not seem anyone knew who to send goods to, or what goods were needed. In this vacuum, some organizations lobbied to be the clearinghouse for giving out aid, at least voluntary aid.\textsuperscript{19}

Korean and American diplomatic structures also strained under the need for relief and a widened global interest in contributing to relief efforts. Han Pyo-Wook of the Korean embassy sought advice about how best to establish a procedure for handling voluntary contributions from the U.S. The embassy received many unsolicited contributions for displaced Koreans, and offers of help, “undoubtedly the result of radio and newspaper reports.” The Embassy was not equipped in July 1950 to handle these offers, as they neither had a system set up, nor any assurance that they could transport, store, or deliver materials. Still, Han was reluctant to discourage donations, because certainly they would be needed in the future. Assistant Secretary of State Dean Rusk and the American Red Cross advised the Korean Embassy to get people and resources in

\textsuperscript{18} Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid, “Relief for Korea,” July 6, 1950, Country: Korea, Country—Japan (Personnel—E. Sharpless) to Country—Norway), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

\textsuperscript{19} Paul French of Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe (CARE) lobbied for the formation of a private umbrella organization for relief efforts, specifically objecting to Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) oversight. Memorandum, Spencer Coxe to Julia Branson, “Relief Work in Korea,” July 24, 1950, Country: Korea Internal Office Memos 1950, Country—Japan (Personnel—E. Sharpless) to Country—Norway), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA.
place who could administer relief work and goods down the line, but they also advised not to issue an appeal for assistance. This was a timing issue: The Korean Embassy was not then capable of accepting or asking for such help, because they did not have a set up for utilizing it. But turning away inquiries about helping or asking them to wait until their offers could be best put to use was risky. Enthusiasm for the Korean War effort waned fast, and it would require special maneuvering to draw American attention to the ongoing relief needs. Dean Rusk suggested to the Korean Embassy that they should find a “responsible disinterested person” to deal with the unsolicited contributions. It was in the same vein that Ambassador Chang Myon suggested “setting up an American relief committee to handle the matter.”

Such a committee would eventually convene, but not until the following year, by which time aid workers and contributors faced a muddled bureaucratic system.

In line with its institutional history and priorities, The Red Cross attempted to set up relief for both North and South Korea, and to act as a kind of mediator to ensure humane conditions on both sides of the war. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) relayed to the Advisory Committee on Foreign Aid of the State Department its intention to assume its “traditional role of alleviating human suffering” by approaching North Korea and UN Forces for permission to give out aid on both sides.

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of the conflict. The Red Cross proposed to monitor both sides in order to uphold the principles of the Geneva Convention and provide emergency relief to belligerents and civilians on all sides. Such an arrangement would have established a clear point of contact for anyone trying to contribute to relief efforts, and would have put the labor of establishing networks for administering relief on an independent organization—that is, an organization not already responsible for overseeing the war or diplomatic measures.

This early move to position the international Red Cross as primary conveyer of aid in Korea failed, however. During the active war period (1950-1953) UN Command had ultimate control, first under MacArthur, followed by Ridgway then Mark Clark. Though some ARC representatives were allowed to serve with American troops in the Red Cross Services to the Armed Forces program, MacArthur continually butted heads with the international Red Cross, limiting their ability to work in Korea with any kind of autonomy.

The benefits that might have sprung from Red Cross control of the relief

22 Forsythe, The Humanitarians; Julia Irwin, Making the World Safe.
23 MacArthur specifically took issue with aid workers wearing ICRC insignia, apparently preferring that all aid workers appeared to work under UNC leadership or went without organization-identifying markers. In a crowded and chaotic field, institutions—including the military—wanted to ensure that aid recipients knew who was giving them aid. For the American military this was a propaganda tool, a means of showcasing American benevolence by visibly supplying people with things and care they needed to survive. For relief organizations who worked in many fields, like the ICRC and AFSC, displaying their own insignia could help them distance themselves from the American state and engender trust among aid recipients and in so doing perhaps reach more recipients. Lyons, Military Policy and Economic Aid, 46-47.
situation also would have created an independent, civilian hierarchy in Korea, a notion not compatible with MacArthur’s preference for total control.

On July 31, 1950 the UN Security Council authorized the Unified Command to take control of immediate relief efforts, consolidating control all things military and civilian in Korea in MacArthur’s hands. But in the opening month of the war, none of the relief infrastructure had been settled. MacArthur was not yet in the practice of exercising control over all relief activities, and of bringing organizations’ efforts under the auspices of the United Nations Civilian Assistance Corps-Korea (UNCACK). At this moment, the field of relief in Korea was open, both for confusion and for efforts at leadership. The UN would not establish civilian organs to take over rehabilitation until October 1950. These, however, did not offer much clarity to the relief landscape.

Absent a UN victory over the North, the United Nations Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea (UNCURK) never got off the ground. And with an armistice continually delayed, UNKRA was stuck in the planning phase for two and a half years. Thus that first chaotic month of the Korean War proved a harbinger of conditions until the armistice in 1953: neither unilateralism (placing the UNC squarely in charge) nor

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24 The General Assembly established the United Nations Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea (UNCURK) on October 7. UNCURK authorization included provisions for relief work, but the Commission faced much the same problems that UNKRA did—the general assembly authorized the commission to take over operations upon the reunification of North and South Korea under UN command—a reunification that never happened. UN Economic and Social Council, Eleventh Session, Plans for Relief and Rehabilitation of Korea: Formulation of Provisional Programmes, E/RES/337(XI), October 1950.

25 Lyons, Military Policy and Economic Aid, 46-47.
multi-agency cooperation (between the military and UN civilian agencies) offered standardization of aid efforts.

Right at the moment when relief agencies’ work was most needed, their workers and projects faced exile from Korea. As one AFSC analysis of conditions in Korea reported, the Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe (CARE), Church World Service (CWS), Licensed Agencies for Relief in Asia (LARA), the National Catholic Welfare Council (NCWC) agencies were among organizations registered with the Advisory Committee for operations in Korea, but “the Outbreak of hostilities has forced a suspension of these agencies’ operations in that country.”26 The warring powers forced existing agencies with experience and resources for administering relief out of the country when the fighting started. This increased the severity of the vacuum in relief leadership, as well as the confusion because the most knowledgeable experts, the people most likely to know the ins-and-outs of shipping and storing materials, those with the most understanding of culture and current politics in Korea, were out of the field. The report went on: “Evacuation of Americans from the area, including agency representatives, precludes resumption of these programs, until more normal conditions are restored. They represent, however, a real potential for American voluntary aid in the

event a special relief program is initiated.” This worked out to an extent: some of these organizations were able to snap back into action. But some, like LARA, never returned. Because while these organizations had the best expertise, an agency’s ability to get into the field of Korean relief depended on their relationship with the UN and military officials. Still, these agencies did “represent real potential for American Voluntary aid” because such agencies carried so much of the weight of relief efforts as the decade wore on. 

Seeking to establish goodwill, the military assigned relief work within its own ranks in addition to authorizing civilian-led projects. The United Nations Civil Assistance Command, Korea (UNCACK), established at the end of 1950, created a network of projects that functioned directly under the UNC. Stemming from the United Nations Public Health and Welfare Detachment (UNPHWD), UNCACK’s primary mission was “the prevention of disease, starvation, and unrest among the civilian

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population.” Spencer Coxe of the American Friends Service Committee described the corps as “preventing unrest and epidemics among the civilian population to the extent that it is necessary to render the fighting forces effective.” Care, in this analysis, was a side-effect of UNCACK’s mission—it’s primary objective was securing the effectiveness of military operations. Though UNCACK had some civilians in its ranks, all staff reported to the U.S. Army. Especially at the start, UNCACK was primarily concerned with immediate, emergency relief.

The timing of UNCACK’s mission was important. MacArthur first authorized the staffing of the project by public health and welfare experts stationed in Tokyo in October 1950. At this point the Eighth Army had seen considerable success at Inchon, and appeared to have the KPA on the run, crossing the 38th parallel on October 1. From this vantage point, UNC assessed that it had victory and Korean reunification under UN control in sight. Thus relief and public health and welfare initiatives seemed appropriate in order to deal with devastated Korean civilians as the military moved North. These same circumstances also spurred the United Nations to start making arrangements for UNKRA. As much as MacArthur valued his own military expertise above other considerations, military and civilian organizations alike recognized that a lasting


ideological victory in Korea would require rebuilding from the war’s wreckage, and immediate consolidation of political control.\footnote{Cumings, \textit{The Korean War}, 25-30.}

However, the situation soon changed drastically. The KPA with massive support from the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army had pushed UN forces south again between late November and January 1951. North Korean forces had captured Seoul for the second time, hobbling South Korea’s capital.\footnote{Cumings, \textit{The Korean War}, 25-30.} Clearly the war was not over. What was called for was a military agency capable of carrying out emergency relief in the midst of war, not at the end of it.

This established a pattern of UNACK carrying on relief efforts amidst perpetual plans to hand over operations. In February 1951, UNACK took over what had previously been Economic Cooperative Administration development plans, expanding operations into agriculture, industry, and education.\footnote{Release no. 135: “With the United Nations Civil Assistance Command in Korea (UNCACK),” 8201st Army Unit—Civil Information Section, Veterans’ Memoirs, Korean War Educator, \url{http://www.koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/bradley_roger/index.htm}.} United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency agents worked under UNACK during the war. Though authorized in December 1950, UNKRA could not get its programs going in a robust way while fighting continued, and thus UNKRA largely supported UNACK projects through 1953. In Korea we see a persistent pattern of conflicting priorities: of security as

\footnote{Release no. 135: “With the United Nations Civil Assistance Command in Korea (UNCACK),” 8201st Army Unit—Civil Information Section, Veterans’ Memoirs, Korean War Educator, \url{http://www.koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/bradley_roger/index.htm}.}
a function of military strategy and security as a function of long-term cooperation with American state. The American government and military advanced a narrative that Korean comfort and cooperation was key to securing this ally; but they also forestalled securing Korean comfort and cooperation in the ongoing pursuit of military victory.

Beyond the large institutional projects of UNCAK, military personnel also carried out voluntary relief projects. American GIs had a habit of caring for Korean children on a case-by-case basis. Individual servicemen and camps would “adopt” orphaned and/or displaced Korean kids, who would play and work around military camps.34 Military officials tended to discourage close one-on-one relationships between GIs and Korean children, concerned about both sexual abuse and transgressions of racial hierarchy. These concerns came out of the notion that white GIs formed relationships that were overly familiar with Korean children, constituting a mixed-race family unit. In rarer cases, American GIs sought to adopt Korean children they knew and bring them to the U.S., an action that constituted literal mixed-race families. The military favored large scale sponsorships (like those of units supporting orphanages) that would please Americans without the unease that came from personal relationships.35


35 “Adoption” was various levels of symbolic: in some cases, GIs supported Korean kids who lived in orphanages, some supported Korean kids who lived at military camps, and in rare cases, American GIs literally adopted Korean children and took them home to the U.S; Woo, *Framed By War*, Arissa Oh, *To Save the Children of Korea: The Cold War Origins of International Adoption* (California: Stanford University Press, 2015).
Some relief initiatives during the war straddled the line between voluntary and institutionalized, civilian and military. The U.S. military supported voluntary relief measures through UNCA CK’s successor, Armed Forces Assistance to Korea (AFAK). Established at the end of hostilities, AFAK created a system for military participation in relief and reconstruction activities. Through AFAK, GIs volunteered time and money for projects mostly in the realm of medicine and engineering, which received federal funding from Congress as well as donations from servicepeople. AFAK projects rebuilt roads and schools and staffed hospitals. As one “Big Picture” newsreel described the organization, before AFAK was officially organized, American servicepeople participated in relief and reconstruction projects on small and local scales. Indeed, even after AFAK became a well-funded and organized institution, the military preferred to frame it as an expression of voluntary benevolence. As the newsreel put it, describing a project of the 51st Signal Battalion at the Do-Bong orphanage in Uijongbu: “No formalities here. No diplomatic procedures. Just good will generated between American soldiers and a bunch of Korean kids.” These military relief efforts signify a culture of institutionalized and casual relief efforts which illuminate national priorities. Indeed, the combination of national and individual priorities animates this entire study: The

36 Mary M. Roberts, “Uncle Sam’s Hard-Boiled Angels” American Journal of Nursing 54 no. 7 (July 1954), 790.

American state prioritized protecting its investment in South Korea after 1950 at the same time that it asked Americans to participate in the war effort as a matter of personal choice, not national mobilization. These efforts also drive home the central irony of war relief: in AFAK and UNACK the same institutions responsible for the destruction of Korea showcased their efforts to rebuild the war-torn country.

Its voluntary nature seems to have been key to AFAK’s positive reputation. In August 1953, right after the armistice, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles publicly put forth a plan to mobilize the American military to work on reconstruction projects in Korea. Dulles’ plan was met with great ire in the press and in Congress, as many Americans thought it inappropriate to have American servicemen labor for the sake of Koreans. Dulles and the Whitehouse backpedaled on this particular plan, but AFAK did the job that the Secretary of State initially proposed. Importantly, however, GIs, the military, and the press emphasized that AFAK resulted from voluntary aid work on behalf of soldiers stationed in Korea. As was so often the case when it came to Korea, centering the individualistic and voluntary nature of service in the care of Koreans proved essential to capturing American support.39

38 In the next chapter I explain in greater depth Americans’ negative reactions to Dulles’ plan.

Though United Nations Command had considerable control over Korea and all relief activities there, non-military voices nonetheless chimed in, and had a sizeable impact on emergency relief and long-term infrastructure building. Paramount among these was of course the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency. Though UNKRA was not able to do much on the ground in Korea until 1953, it still took part in planning. UNKRA also supplied staff for UNACK-led projects, and, most importantly for the chapters that follow this one, organized and empowered voluntary agencies.

UNKRA institutionalized cooperation with and mobilization by voluntary agencies from its inception. Augusta Mayerson served as Chief of the Division of Voluntary Agency Liaison for UNKRA—a division whose very existence demonstrated UNKRA’s commitment to using voluntary agencies for projects. Mayerson came to UNKRA from a background with the American Red Cross and the United States Displaced Persons Commission, for whom she was information officer for the program for refugees in Europe.40 In the latter position, Mayerson developed experience with inter-agency cooperation as the DPC worked with the International Refugee Organization (IRO), the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, and NGOs like the YMCA. In her position at the UNKRA, Mayerson put that experience to work: she was included and looked to in nearly every conversation regarding civilian

relief programs in Korea, and memos from a remarkably wide set of organizations crossed her desk.

Mayerson’s story shows how the UNKRA emerged from a specific context of Cold War internationalism and NGO mobilization. David Ekbladh has argued that the agency emerged out of a rural development ethos developed by the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration in China, itself heavily influenced by American policy and modeled after projects like the Tennessee Valley Authority during the 1930s. Though some of the large-scale electrification, industrialization, and agricultural projects that the UNKRA planned had a similar shape to ECA and UNRRA projects in China, the agency was most directly shaped by the IRO experience that so many of its appointees brought to the Agency. Mostly notably, UNKRA agent general J. Donald Kingsley came to UNKRA through the IRO. Mayerson also had a background with a refugee organization that worked with the IRO. UNKRA housing, medical, and education projects mobilized voluntary agencies similarly to how the IRO had.\(^41\)

UNKRA was shaped by the development-minded programs of UNRRA, but also by the emergency relief ethos of the IRO and other similar organizations. Thus modernization and development were only part of UNKRA’s experiment in international cooperation—within another experiment in UN police action. Indeed,

emergency relief had as least as much place in the conversation, and arguably more potential for mobilization. The International Refugee Organization worked to attend to needs of people in emergency, unstable situations, giving out goods and care to meet urgent circumstances, not building lasting or long-term infrastructure. American empire building in the Cold War was thus more complex than previous treatments suggest: development and modernization rightly were indeed important, but relief was also key.

Further exemplifying Korea’s position as an early Cold War inflection point, the UN modeled aid infrastructure, including cooperation with voluntary agencies in Korea, in part on previous projects in Palestine and West Germany. “Some Thoughts on the Relationship Between Non-governmental Organizations and United Nations Relief in Korea,” presented before the UN in late 1950, called for participation between government and “international and national private organizations.” The author claimed that rehabilitation and reconstruction in North and South Korea (at this point unification under favorable UN conditions was still the hope of many) would best be carried out with the aid of NGOs. The author noted that many NGO personnel were experienced in various kinds of aid administration, and that utilizing private organizations would go far to garner “people’s support.”

The report cited aid schemes for Palestinian refugees. The League of the Red Cross Societies, the International Red Cross, and the AFSC “became responsible for field operations in three separate areas under an integrated overall plan.” UNKRA agents carried out some of this model eventually. UNKRA generally oversaw development plans, shipping logistics, and economic infrastructure, and private organizations ran specific missions somewhat autonomously, though with funding from and in conjunction with the overall UNKRA scheme.

The report likewise saw a potential model in the British zone of Germany after World War II: The British Red Cross supervised a dozen non-governmental organizations, which in teams conducted field work like operating hospitals, administering transportation for displaced people, and organizing child care. “This work” the report asserted, “helped reactivate local private welfare agencies in such a way that these groups could increasingly take over local responsibilities and resume their long range work.” This scheme also required liaison between organizations, and


representatives specifically selected to coordinate between other NGOs and the umbrella.\(^{45}\)

The report suggested Palestine and West Germany as models going forward in Korea, as the peninsula dealt with some similar circumstances of displaced peoples, newly drawn and fluctuating territorial lines, and war recovery. Even as the Korean War posed problems and conditions that felt wholly new to observers, experts sought to recycle relief models from other regions. This speaks to the power that UN officials vested in cooperation with and use of voluntary agencies—they utilized common strategy in multiple global arenas.

In some ways, this is precisely how aid work proceeded in Korea, with some notable differences. First, the umbrella for NGO operations in Korea was UNKRA (during the war UNCACK), as opposed to Red Cross leadership in Palestine and West Germany. Jockeying for leadership over aid administration aside, none of the expert voluntary organizations who sought to put themselves in charge at the start of the war ever had any real authority or oversight over other voluntary organizations. Also, the liaisons between agencies in Korea were exceedingly complicated. NGOs that operated in Korea reported to UNKRA and UNCACK, but were also organized through the Korean Association of Voluntary Agencies (KAVA) and the Advisory Committee on

Voluntary Aid (ACVA), which worked under the purview of the State Department. They also worked with organizations that were temporary or task-specific, like American Relief for Korea (ARK), and the American Korean Foundation (AKF).46

Because of the overlapping concerns of civilian and military agencies, some workers jumped from agency to agency, as was the case with Philip Ryan, a Social Program Administrator who started what was meant to be a six-month trip with the Army, and ended up working for eight months to bring together the goals of UNCACK, UNKRA, and ROK for 1954. Ryan helped to lay the groundwork for a coordinating committee with representatives from each agency, but he himself stated that planning was difficult without knowing what resources would be available to each agency. As always, the question of whether to prioritize long-term or short-term projects was also a hurdle.47

Philip Ryan came to Korea through years of experience in civilian relief. After working for an organization to provide relief to unhoused populations in New York City, during World War II Ryan worked for the American Red Cross in Europe and the Philippines. After the war, Ryan continued working on ARC international projects from


Washington, D.C. Like other Americans who would work on civilian relief in Korea, Ryan also had a background with the International Refugee Organization (IRO), to which he was appointed chief of operations in the American-occupied zone of Germany in 1948. From 1951 to 1952 Ryan was a civilian expert for the U.S. Army in Korea, after which he returned to the U.S. and worked for the National Health Council, the National Association for Mental Health, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Though his time in Korea was short, Ryan became an important voice in conversations about civilian relief in Korea. As a civilian liaison, Ryan explained the relationships between among agencies; he was often cited as an expert on relief needs and infrastructure in Korea.  

Whatever challenges Philip Ryan in faced attempting to wed the programs of UNCACK, UNKRA, and the ROK government, one piece of the puzzle seemed to fit without question: the necessity of voluntary agencies in Korea. Ryan highlighted that much of the UNKRA staff, who should be taking the reins on reconstruction efforts, were International Refugee Organization veterans. 

49 David Ekbladh has argued that UNKRA emerged out of a rural development ethos developed by the UNRRA in China, itself heavily influenced by American policy and modeled after projects like the Tennessee Valley Authority during the 1930s. Though some of the large-scale electrification, industrialization, and agricultural projects that UNKRA planned had a similar shape to ECA and UNRRA projects in China, UNKRA was most directly shaped by the IRO experience that so many of its appointees brought to the Agency. As such, UNKRA housing, medical, and education projects mobilized voluntary agencies similarly to how the IRO had. See David Ekbladh, “‘The Proving Ground’: Modernization and U.S. Policy in Northeast Asia, 1945-1960” in The Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an

gave UNKRA agents experience working with voluntary agencies. “They are all keen, he said, to find ways to increase the assistance of the voluntary agencies and will give appropriate credit,” the last part a subtle nod to the entrepreneurship of competing agencies.50

Ryan also talked about the priorities of the UNKRA: he called for a shift from emergency relief to economic aid. The way he saw it, the Army could easily make a case for, and receive, the resources for emergency aid. It was much more difficult to argue for funds for rebuilding components of South Korea’s economic base, like factories and electric grids. This is where the UNKRA could take the lead. If and when relief needs were not as pressing, the UNKRA could devote itself to longer-term projects. Ryan specifically pointed to cooperation between KAVA, the UNKRA, and the Unitarian Service Committee’s Educational Mission: “International exchange funds are used as a grant for the Unitarian Service committee team; billets and other logistics are provided by the Army, while the Mission itself works directly with the ROK Ministry of

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Education.”\(^{51}\) The cooperation between voluntary, military, and civilian government agencies made for a project in the area of “permanent development,” and one that had the potential for training Koreans to be citizens amenable to American messages and productive in capitalist labor.\(^{52}\)

When in March 1953 Philip Ryan met with the ACVA Committee on Korea, he stressed the necessity of voluntary aid. He had been working with the Army, which had its own funding and infrastructure for relief and reconstruction work. But Ryan identified “by-products” that could emerge specifically from voluntary aid: “understanding, sympathy, the people-to-people concept.” It was not simply that there was a need for more relief goods and more people to administer them. Ryan felt that the intangible things that emerged from voluntary agencies’ work were also of value for bolstering morale in Korea, and for creating greater awareness of and sympathy for Koreans in the U.S.\(^{53}\) Ryan’s hopes for inter-agency cooperation were meant to foster care: that is, Koreans receiving aid to nurture their health, well-being, and pro-American attitudes; and aid givers (Americans) receiving messaging and participating in

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programing that sparked and maintained their concern over the fate of Koreans. Both these desired results required the multi-directional sharing of tangible and intangible resources.

Both through his professional trajectory and his astute analysis, Philip Ryan captured the spirit of relief work in Korea. Hopping from organization to organization in the 1940s and 50s, Ryan was a clear example of a professional class of policy and relief workers who moved between NGO and government jobs. Ryan’s background working with unhoused people in New York enabled insight in working with unsheltered refugee populations, which produced expertise on mobilizing voluntary agencies. Though Ryan first went to Korea with little special knowledge of the region, he had a keen understanding of the necessity of voluntary mobilization, which he enlisted to shape UN policy.

It was thus Philip Ryan who laid out most clearly the relief landscape in Korea as the war came to a close. Interested parties like major charitable organizations turned to Ryan’s analysis of the relationships between relief agencies. A memorandum circulated by the National Social Welfare Assembly, prepared by Ryan, offers the best picture of voluntary relief work in July 1953, just before the armistice.54 In the memorandum Ryan clearly laid out the complex and dynamic relationships between UNCAK, UNKRA, "Staff Memorandum on Relief for Korea,” National Social Welfare Assembly, July 22, 1953, 1, Folder 5: Relationship-Liaison-Support to Voluntary Agency Programs (American Relief for Korea—Part A), Box 26, S-0526, United Nations Archives, New York.
and American voluntary agencies, including American Relief for Korea and the American Korean Foundation as well as smaller organizations like CARE, Church World Service, and the American Friends Service Committee.\textsuperscript{55}

From the start of the war until the Armistice in July 1953, the United Nations Unified Command had near complete control over civilian aid in Korea. As stated above, MacArthur demanded and enjoyed unilateral authority over civilian relief initiatives during his tenure as commander of the UNC, a pattern which remained after Truman relieved him of duty in April 1951. By the time of Ryan’s report in July 1953, General Mark Clark was in charge and the UNCAK maintained primary control over relief efforts. The UNC scarcely let relief workers into Korea, so even though the UNCAK leaned heavily on donated goods (mostly used clothing) from American civilians, the Army oversaw nearly all shipping, receiving, and distribution of those goods. There was therefore little possibility of targeted donations for Koreans before July 1953: collected donated materials went into a common pool from which UNCAK handed out goods where they were needed.\textsuperscript{56} The UNC was in the process of slackening those restrictions, however, at the time of Ryan’s report: Voluntary agencies could ship their goods for projects, and representatives of agencies were allowed into Korea for

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{56} Philip Ryan, “Staff Memorandum on Relief for Korea,” National Social Welfare Assembly, July 22, 1953, Folder 5: Relationship-Liaison-Support to Voluntary Agency Programs (American Relief for Korea—Part A), Box 26, S-0526, United Nations Archives, New York.
relief operations. “The Military authorities continue to indicate that there are urgent needs in Korea which voluntary agencies could help meet.” 57 The military sought to have civilians take over responsibility for relief efforts, though Clark allowed this in only a piecemeal fashion. Nonetheless in 1953 voluntary agencies had the opportunity to expand their operations in Korea and mobilize around targeted projects at home to supply them.58

Korea’s opening up for civilian projects also meant changes for the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency. The General Assembly had authorized UNKRA in December 1950, and the United States especially had committed substantial funding to the Agency. Yet, the UNKRA had not really gotten off the ground. Peace had been continually delayed in the two and a half years since the Agency’s creation. So the UNKRA was stuck in a holding pattern of planning projects and not having the authority to do much. But with an end to fighting in sight in sight in the Spring of 1953, UNKRA began to make moves. The Agency requested a substantially larger budget than previous years. In the 1952 fiscal year the UNKRA expended $3.5 million. For the 1953


58 Some donation drives at home already purported to be for targeted recipients, and how voluntary agents, like the Maryknoll Sisters, were already in country, nonetheless Clark’s move expanded the field.
fiscal year UNKRA planned a $70 million expenditure but was “unable to carry out a program on that scale.” For the 1954 fiscal year, UNKRA created a $130 million budget.59

With the anticipation of the war’s end UNC began planning for UNKRA’s takeover of rehabilitation projects, making allowances for UNKRA staff to be placed on UNCACK projects, and for UNKRA to take over some programs previously overseen by the Army. “Under these agreements,” according to Ryan, “UNKRA [was] to take over full operational responsibility six months after the cessation of hostilities,” which it did, assuming the position in January 1954.60

With this shifting leadership in relief efforts, the UNKRA encouraged voluntary agencies to expand projects and make plans to staff programs on the ground in Korea. UNKRA particularly favored “welfare, medical, and educational programs.”61 The agency made grants to voluntary organizations to develop programs, and supported transportation of goods to Korea. In return, voluntary agencies provided the labor and

59 Of this $130 million, the U.S. was expected to contribute $71 million, nearly 55 percent. Ryan speculated that the UNKRA budget—and their plans for projects—were in a precarious position because of “the unpredictability of congressional action on both [Civilian Relief in Korea] and UNKRA appropriations,” as well as American antipathy over uneven responsibility to fund UNKRA. That is, Americans thought other countries did not contribute enough funds for Korea. Philip Ryan, “Staff Memorandum on Relief for Korea,” National Social Welfare Assembly, July 22, 1953, Folder 5: Relationship-Liaison-Support to Voluntary Agency Programs (American Relief for Korea—Part A), Box 26, S-0526, United Nations Archives, New York.


logistics for their own projects: “These grants to some 25 different agencies cover a wide
variety of needs, including repair of facilities, food and medical supplies, personnel,
transportation, office space, and projects for special groups such as lepers, widows, etc.
Although the UNKRA cannot provide logistic support for voluntary agency staff in
Korea it invites and supports voluntary agency representatives making short visits to
Korea to develop aid programs.” 62 Voluntary agencies thus carried out many of the
projects that had close contact with Korean civilians.63 Aside from the positive public
relations (“people-to-people” care), the mobilization of voluntary agencies offloaded
much intensive and long-term labor to people who worked for voluntary agencies. That
is, the UNKRA did not have to staff all the projects it funded, and could mobilize a
wider pool of talent than the UN necessarily had thus saving the UNKRA in labor and
logistics costs. It created what is today called a public-private partnership.

The UNKRA maintained an office of voluntary agency liaison, and earmarked a
modest budget for funding voluntary agency projects. Though the budget was relatively
small, it more than tripled from fiscal years 1953 to 1954, increasing from $600,000 to

62 Ryan, “Staff Memorandum on Relief for Korea,” National Social Welfare Assembly, July 22, 1953, 2-3,
Folder 5: Relationship-Liaison-Support to Voluntary Agency Programs (American Relief for Korea—Part A),
Box 26, S-0526, United Nations Archives, New York.

63 Sylvia Van Kirk has conceptualized such arrangements as “tender ties”: intimate imperial contact between
colonizer and colonized in Many Tender Ties: Women in the Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870
$2,000,000. The voluntary agencies themselves made a substantial aid contribution to Korea, donating roughly $27 million in goods (again, mostly used clothing) and cash from June 1950 to June 1953.

The relief landscape Ryan laid out in his July 1953 report was a situation in flux. The military strategized to lessen its investment in Korea. UNKRA strategized to expand its investment, and to finally begin projects continually delayed by ongoing hostilities. And voluntary agencies, mobilized by both the UNC and the UNKRA, worked to shift mobilization from homefront collections of goods to projects on the ground in Korea.

The lack of a true peace beyond the armistice would necessitate an ongoing American-led UN military presence in South Korea. Though Philip Ryan offered an accurate forecast of voluntary agencies’ abilities to expand projects on the ground in Korea, there was no smooth handoff of relief responsibilities. The ad hoc cooperation on relief and rehabilitation projects between the UNKRA, the UNC, and the Republic of Korea continued for several years. Voluntary agencies found themselves liaising not straightforwardly with the UNKRA, but obliquely with military and Korean and

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65 Ibid.

66 The homefront collections kept going, of course. Indeed, with UNACK slackening its hold on relief projects, American voluntary agencies could make good on their promises of providing specific kinds of relief to specific people.
American government officials as well. There was no person or agency in charge of voluntary relief efforts, either in Korea on the homefront. Networks for moving goods and people, for example, would remain embedded in the military.\textsuperscript{67} While this created some confusion in regards to chain of command, program planning, and where to send goods, it also created opportunities; if an agency could not get what they wanted from the UN, they could look for support from the army, or vice versa.

On the ground in Korea, the lack of clear hierarchy at the war’s end created some confusion about both responsibility and credit.\textsuperscript{68} This exacerbated the potential corruption and inefficiency in giving out aid, something Friends Service workers observed in their milk program. AFSC officials alleged that some of their relief goods were lost to unscrupulous Korean governmental agents hoping to profit in illicit markets; and that when goods did reach their targets, it was without proper

\textsuperscript{67} Shipping logistics, a major cost for voluntary agencies, also required the complex coordination of UN and American policies. For the most part the Army covered costs for shipping goods to Korea from around the world during the war. In 1954 Public Law 665, Section 409 created provisions for the U.S. to cover costs of relief goods coming from the U.S. UN agreements prompted the Army to cover the cost of materiel coming from around the world. This still created a funding gap, where the UNKRA remained in charge of relief goods shipping from anywhere but the U.S.—and confusion about how to deliver goods to Korea. Whatever the U.S.’s complaints that other countries did not contribute enough to the effort in Korea, the U.S. created policies that made it difficult to do so. “Notes on meeting called by CAMG, D/A Washington, RE Financing of Shipments of Donations for Civilian Relief Programs in Korea,” June 10, 1954, Folder 9: Civilian Relief to Korea—Policy and Procedures, Box 27, S-0526, UN Archives, New York.

\textsuperscript{68} American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service, Inc., Committee on Korea Meeting, p.4, January 14, Folder 1: Relationships-Liaison-Non-Governmental Organizations-American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Services, Inc.-Part A, Box 26, S-0526, UN Archives, New York.
acknowledgement of the Quakers’ contributions. On the other hand, overlapping responsibilities between institutions created a fairly capacious system of relief and recovery: Koreans received relief from UNKRA and also the Army and also American aid workers. Aside from covering different bases, this bolstered the vision of American aid to Korea as a project of international cooperation, military strength, and voluntary charity. The bureaucracies of care in Korea created widespread inefficiencies at the same time that they generated opportunities for Americans seeking to provide relief, and expanded American influence in Korea.

The ideal organization of relief work, from the perspective of the UNKRA, was one that allowed for long-term projects, utilized existing infrastructure, wedded the priorities of the UNCACK and the ROK as well as the UNKRA, and could operate relatively independently of government agencies. UNKRA Voluntary Agencies Liaison Officer Helen Wilson expressed in January 1953 her preference for voluntary agency projects that could “establish their own facilities.” At the same time, Ryan and Wilson

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69 “Report on Korea from Louis W. Schneider” November 11, 1954, Korea Administration Publicity, Country-Korea (Coms. & Orgs.—K.A.V.A.), Foreign Service, AFSC Archives, Philadelphia, PA. This problem of giving proper credit was widespread, and had substantial political stakes. In 1954, the American Red Cross contributed several thousand tons of grain for emergency relief on the heels of major floods in Eastern Europe. The shipments, which went to both American and Soviet aligned countries, raised political contest between the U.S. and the Soviet Union over how relief goods were labeled: the two powers recognized that showcasing the origin of the grain could lend credit to both he organization and the country of origin. For its part, the American Red Cross recognized that the air of neutrality—not being too tightly aligned—improved its neutral humanitarian credentials. See Julia Irwin, “Raging Rivers and Propaganda Weevils: Transnational Disaster Relief, Cold War Politics, and the 1954 Danube and Elbe Floods” Diplomatic History 40 no. 5 (2016): 893-921.
showed their approval for projects like the AFSC’s that utilized Army overseas shipping infrastructure. In both cases, the most important thing was that voluntary agencies staffed their own projects. But projects needed a combination of independence and cooperation: UNKRA and the Army by 1953 were ready for voluntary agencies to take the lead on rehabilitation projects, but those projects required cooperation with government oversight. Church World Service, for example proposed to expand their activities, finding they could do a lot more if they were allowed more personnel in-country. CWS representative D.W. Edwards, found that they would need logistical support to bring more workers to Korea, a task for which the Army claimed it did not want responsibility. The UNKRA wanted the Korean Association of Voluntary Agencies (KAVA) to help set things up instead. For their part, voluntary agencies wanted and needed government agency cooperation as well. The general consensus was that organizations could carry out more and more efficient projects if they could get reimbursement for ocean freight for relief goods. Whatever money UNKRA or the Army was spending on shipping costs, they were more than making up by outsourcing relief and reconstruction personnel to voluntary agencies, not to mention they saved on the energy and cost of planning and logistics.\textsuperscript{70}

\textsuperscript{70} American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service, Inc., Committee on Korea Meeting, p.4, January 14, Folder 1: Relationships-Liaison-Non-Governmental Organizations-American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Services, Inc.-Part A, Box 26, S-0526, UN Archives, New York.
Even before the UN Korean Reconstruction Agency started actively pursuing its plans in Korea, it faced hurdles liaising between individuals and voluntary agencies. In January 1953 Helen Wilson wrote to the Executive Director of the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service, about individual Americans’ financial contributions to UNKRA. Wilson noted a pattern of Americans sending in usually small sums and expressing their desire that the funds be put to use for Korean children. Usually, Wilson found, the sums were small enough that the UNKRA could relatively easily accommodate the requests that came with them—one $15 donation, for example, the agency used to throw a Christmas party for orphans. The problem was with larger sums: though the UNKRA did not solicit individual donations from Americans, people sent them anyway, and Wilson worried that the UNKRA might be seen as competing with American voluntary agency fundraising. Wilson noted that one hefty donation of $300 came on the heels of an ABC special that highlighted the UNKRA’s work. People sent their funds to whomever they thought could get them to Korean children, and the UNKRA seemed like a logical vehicle.

The UN Korean Reconstruction Agency, however, did not necessarily have the means to allocate individual, small donations. This particular one they sent to Foster Parents Plan for War Children with the consent of ABC. But doing this for every

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71 Letter, Helen Wilson to Charlotte Owen, January 16, 1953, Folder 9: Civilian Relief to Korea—Policy and Procedures, Box 27, S-0526, UN Archives, New York.
individual donation would require seeking out approval to transfer funds to other organizations either under or apart from the UNKRA, itself a giant logistical hurdle. Moreover, every donation that came in to the agency with the request that it be allocated to children required the UNKRA to seek out an appropriate venue. Thus Helen Wilson suggested the creation of a working committee “small enough to be available for immediate action when necessary to act as recipient, custodian, and allocating body for such funds.” The committee would send funds to appropriate agencies and missions.\textsuperscript{72}

This situation speaks to several characteristics of relief work in Korea. First, it shows how ad hoc this work tended to be. Helen Wilson’s office was in early 1953 in the practice of receiving random donations from individuals, and having to figure out where each one should go. Even a solution to this administrative problem was itself on-the-fly: a committee which could act fast and continue to make case-by-case decisions about funds. Second, the practice of individuals sending in cash donations speaks to people’s felt personal obligations to help Koreans. People sent cash to whomever they could think of in the hopes that it might provide some relief. Finally, the fact that so many of the funds were earmarked for Korean children speaks to how the givers saw

\textsuperscript{72} Letter, Helen Wilson to Charlotte Owen, January 16, 1953, Folder 9: Civilian Relief to Korea—Policy and Procedures, Box 27, S-0526, UN Archives, New York.
Korean children as particularly vulnerable and in need of care, to the extent that they wrote checks with little more specification than that their funds should help children.\textsuperscript{73}

The problem of trying to allocate random donations did not go away as the war ended. The United Nations Women’s Guild, made up of women of connected with United Nations organizations, had $10,000 for Korea sitting idle. For the better part of a year from 1955 to 1956, the Women’s Guild wrote back and forth with UNKRA officials, trying to pinpoint worthy recipients for their funds. The women of the Guild sought a school or hospital for children that was not already supported by a mission or agency.\textsuperscript{74}

The funds, which the Women’s Guild raised through a UNESCO program, were intended for “the training of war orphans who suffered greatly from the war.”\textsuperscript{75}

But it took months to allocate the funds. This was due in part to the Women’s Guild’s priorities—UNKRA agents were hard-pressed to find institutions not already operating under the guidance and support of a UN agency and/or a Christian mission. On a more granular level, the Guild objected to UNKRA’s recommendations of particular institutions on the basis of what specifically the money would be spent on. In one instance, funds would go to training equipment to teach tailoring and beauty parlor

\textsuperscript{73} Letter, Helen Wilson to Charlotte Owen, January 16, 1953, Folder 9: Civilian Relief to Korea—Policy and Procedures, Box 27, S-0526, UN Archives, New York.

\textsuperscript{74} C.W. Wood to David Rolbein, June 22, 1955, Folder 1: UNKRA-Civilian Relief to Korea-Requests for and Offers of Assistance: UN Women’s Guild Donations, Box 29, S-0526, UN Archives, New York.

\textsuperscript{75} Esther Park to C. W. Wood, July 8, 1955, Folder 1: UNKRA-Civilian Relief to Korea-Requests for and Offers of Assistance: UN Women’s Guild Donations, Box 29, S-0526, UN Archives, New York.
skills—the Guild responded that they wanted to support training for more general skills. So negotiations between the Guild, the UNKRA, and institutions on the ground in Korea dragged on. At the same time that all parties involved recognized the dire emergency relief need the war created, they dragged their feet, unwilling to risk the money being spent in ways the Guild deemed inappropriate.

But the fund allocation proved complicated also because of the bureaucracies in play in Korea. The Guild offered the money, with the caveats about its allocation, to the UNKRA. David Rolbein of the agency’s Division of Liaison communicated with the Guild, while Chester Wood of the UNKRA’s education section investigated placement for the funds among hospitals, orphanages, and schools serving Korean children. So communication passed through the hands of institutions, through Wood’s office, and Rolbein’s, before getting back to the Women’s Guild. The back-and-forth about where to send the money lasted from April to December 1955.

Funds from the Women’s Guild ultimately purchased supplies at the School for Working Boys in Seoul. The school, known in Korea as the “Shoeshine School,” was so named for the children for whom it was started. Korean National Police Officer Eung Pal Kwon was assigned to guard the downtown Seoul post exchange in 1953, and found his beat overrun by homeless boys making tiny amounts of money by offering shoe shines

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26 Rolbein to Wood, June 2, 1955, Folder 1: UNKRA-Civilian Relief to Korea-Requests for and Offers of Assistance: UN Women’s Guild Donations, Box 29, S-0526, UN Archives, New York.
to passersby. Finding his efforts to shoo the children away from his post fruitless, Kwon engaged the boys in conversation, and eventually lessons. From these rag-tag lessons came the school, to which Korea Civil Assistance Command contributed supplies for building a stable space in August 1954. The school was meant specifically to educate working children: classes were held in the evening so the children could attend to their day-time jobs shining shoes, working in department stores, and delivering newspapers. In February 1955, the school admitted eighty girls, in addition to the more than 600 boys attending.

Figure 3: Korean Boys Shine GIs’ Shoes.
Hanson A. Williams, Jr. Collection of Photographs and Negatives, Pepperdine University.


Ibid.
Korean first lady Francesca Donner Rhee took an interest in the school and made personal appeals for its support to the Korean government and UNKRA.⁷⁹ It was at Rhee’s urging that the Women’s Guild funds went to the school—along with a $5,000 UNKRA grant in the shape of construction materials.⁸⁰ Ultimately the UN Women’s Guild got credit, along with the Korean Police who took an interest in the school, for building this institution. A March 1956 article in the Korea edition of *Stars and Stripes* celebrated the school’s accomplishments in providing sanctuary and life skills to the war victims of Seoul, and reminded readers that the school could always use more supplies, an implicit request for donations of goods and funds.

Aid projects carried on unsteadily for several years after the end of the war. The United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency never quite achieved the stability or leadership in Korea the agency imagined at its inception. In 1954 deputy agent of UNKRA Sir Arthur Rucker described the agency’s primary mission as one of reconstruction, claiming that responsibility for relief lay with KCAC (which took over for UNCACK in 1953). According to Rucker, the war’s delayed peace and rocky end set UNKRA up perfectly for a mission of development: “mines and factories are being

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⁷⁹ David Rolbein to M. Jacobson, November 22, 1955, Folder 1: UNKRA-Civilian Relief to Korea-Requests for and Offers of Assistance: UN Women’s Guild Donations, Box 29, S-0526, UN Archives, New York.

rebuilt, the agricultural and fishing industries are being restored, communications are being repaired, and as much as possible is being done to rehabilitate the social services.” Of course, those industrial and agricultural institutions were in need of repair because of the war, but Korea was an excellent canvas for Point Four-style technical assistance, with the war providing the logic for why the U.S. should invest there. All told, the UNKRA invested $127 million in Korea, the bulk coming from the U.S. Writing in 1958 about the UN’s defunding of UNKRA, Gene Lyons found Rucker’s mission incomplete. So, too, the historian Ryan McMahon claims that UNKRA never lived up to its own grand aspirations. Syngman Rhee’s laser focus on developing a strong military to fight communism drained resources from all other

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82 Point Four was a major Truman administration foreign policy objective. The fourth foreign policy talking point in his 1949 inaugural address, Truman proposed shaping world economies through technical assistance. Truman proposed utilizing American expertise in industrialization and agriculture to build institutions in countries at risk of falling to Communism. Stephen Macekura, “The Point Four Program and U.S. International Development Policy,” Political Science Quarterly 121 no. 1 (Spring 2013): 127-160.


projects, making it exceedingly difficult for development to take hold in the 1950s—or for lasting relief to be provided.  

But the irony of this administrative labyrinth and its overlaps with other complicated bureaucracies is that it created space for caring initiatives even as some dismissed the priority of “emergency relief” in favor of more institutionalized development programs. By shifting responsibility for projects that looked more like relief than development (like emergency housing and healthcare) to voluntary agencies, UNCACK and UNKRA created opportunities for non-governmental organizations to form lasting relationship in Korean communities. I explore these voluntary projects in subsequent chapters.

The complexities of the aid bureaucracy arose out of the particular circumstances of the war. The bureaucracy necessarily relied on a complex mix of people, and even in hierarchical institutions, like the U.S. military, operated without clear or binding protocols. This in turn necessitated the proliferation of organizations designed to control, collect, and administer aid, which further complicated the bureaucracy. The consistency across this complex landscape was the necessity of cooperation, of providing emergency relief, and of mobilizing voluntary agencies. These complexities of aid bureaucracy themselves informed the nature of aid programs in Korea—who was

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involved, who was in charge, who was served. Finally, most importantly, the Korean War created the circumstances in which care animated institutions’ and individuals’ international cooperation. And this set a tone for the rest of the Cold War. As I explore in the next chapter, as these care networks developed, on the U.S. side there arose the problem of managing the degree to which Americans cared for and about Korea.
2. The Affective Homefront: Public Opinion and Civic Engagement with Korea

Cordelle Lefer was haunted. That was the word she used. In 1956 the specter in the Angelino’s life was not an unsettled spirit in her house, but a living boy seeking shelter six thousand miles away. The person who haunted Lefer was Kang Koo Ri, a ten-year-old orphaned Korean boy that she’d read about in Life magazine.¹

Kang first appeared in Life in July 1951. The article, titled “The Little Boy Who Wouldn’t Smile,” spun a tragic and moving tale. In May 1951, U.S. Army patrols went into the Uijongbu area in northwest South Korea, were Kang lived, to clear out civilians.² The soldiers found Kang filthy and alone in his home, surrounded by the smell of decay. The odor, they soon discovered, came from Kang’s mother’s corpse. Journalist Michael Rougier described a harrowing sight: “the body of a woman lying on a straw mat in [a] corner, her face covered with maggots and flies. Kang’s mother had evidently been dead for several days; her body had started to decompose.”³ When the soldiers carried the tiny, five-year-old Kang away from his home, the child wept and reached for his mother.

¹ A Famous Orphan Finds a Happy Home,“ Life, May 14, 1956, 129.

² Uijongbu was in the northwest of South Korea, just below the 38th parallel, en route from North Korea to Seoul. Right in the path of invasion, the region was torn apart by ebb and flow of UN and KPA forces from summer 1950 to winter 1951.

Kang was taken into the care of American soldiers and subsequently transferred to Bo Yook Won orphanage in Taegu. Initially malnourished, uncommunicative, and debilitatingly shy, Kang slowly opened up. He started playing with other orphan children and grew much healthier. “The Little Boy Who Wouldn’t Smile” ended with a photograph of Kang laughing.⁴

Rougier took an interest in Kang and periodically published updates on how the child and other orphans at Bo Yook Won were doing. Other people took interest in Kang as well. In September of 1951, a letter to the editor in Life showed a picture of Kang smiling next to an American GI. It stated that after the initial article ran, the Korean orphans had received countless gifts from Life subscribers.⁵ Kang’s image and story were picked up in other publications and used as fundraising tools. In a February 1952 YWCA newsletter, Church World Service ran an image of Kang, as well as a brief rehashing of his story, in an appeal for the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.’s annual fundraiser for relief to Korea, India, Palestine, and Central Europe.⁶ Kang quickly

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⁴ Ibid.


⁶ The National Council of Churches of Christ (NCC) was and is an ecumenical umbrella organization for non-Catholic Christian churches in the United States. NCC’s interest in Korea was mostly oriented toward service rather than proselytization. The NCC’s Social Creeds called for the abatement of all poverty and the protection of children. Hence their interest in Korean children like Kang. “One Great Hour of Sharing,” YWCA Magazine, February 1952, Folder 1, Box 699, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA.
became the face of suffering—and the face of relief—for Americans concerned about Korea.

In 1956, Cordelle Lefer of Los Angeles adopted Kang, saying that his image haunted her. No wonder—Kang was everywhere.

**Figure 4: Kang Koo Ri. Michael Rougier, Life, July 23, 1953.**

Kang Koo Ri’s prominence in American publications and his subsequent adoption teach important lessons about how Americans engaged Korea in the 1950s. Rougier captured and tracked tales of suffering Koreans, and packaged them for

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American consumption. Those stories clearly had an impact, as Americans mobilized in voluntary actions to raise funds and goods for Koreans. As the story shows, American voluntary mobilization took many shapes—from soldiers spending their off time with orphans, to individuals and groups collecting relief goods to help these children, to people like Cordelle Lefer, who adopted a child she had never met from a country she had never visited and brought him to a place totally new to him.

Every facet of this tale hinged on building affective bonds—Rougier highlighted the intense suffering, resilience, and cuteness of Korean children. He pointed out that workers at the orphanage and soldiers at the military camp were obsessed with the boy—gesturing to a protective impulse based on the tragic experience and cuteness of the diminutive child. This was the tenor of American mobilization for the Korean war. Whatever Americans’ problems with U.S. intervention in Korea, many sought individual ways to engage the country. Their efforts supported narratives about “saving” Korea without sinking deeper into a long war.8

Rougier showcased Korean deservingness. Who could be more deserving of American care than a child like Kang? In every photograph in the original story, Kang appears both cute and sad. His body is tiny, and in many images his face looks pained,

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8 Americans were split on questions of whether the war should be “contained”—in 1952 Eisenhower ran on a campaign of ending the war in Korea by expanding it. Americans showed support for particular kinds of expansion, especially those they thought could produce a quick and decisive victory. These voluntary initiatives provided a mode of engagement that could exist separately from official state moves in Korea—or at least appear to.
perhaps on the verge of tears. The boy could never have cared for himself, so it would fall to benevolent Americans—GIs and civilians alike—to ensure his safety. Rougier explained that other children in the American military camps and in the orphanages all over Korea had stories just like Kang’s, that the war had robbed them of family and protection, so the U.S., parent-like, must take care of Koreans—and Korea.

Kang’s story and the imagery in it help us to understand how information about and concern for Korea circulated in the 1950s. In addition to follow-up stories in Life, Kang appeared in religious publications and pamphlets, and in numerous solicitations of funds. In a 1957 issue of World Communique, the publication for the World Alliance of the YMCA, Kang’s image appeared in a letter from the editor. Occupying only a sidebar on the front page of the issue, the piece featured a picture of a broadly smiling Kang, holding up a picture of himself that appeared in Life in 1950. The piece in World Communique reiterated that it was through international charitable giving and Christian commitment to helping others that Kang’s story had a sweet ending. The article also served as a means for editor Paul G. Guinness to introduce the content of the World Communique Issue: coverage of the 1957 conference on “The Refugee Problem—Today

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9 Susie Woo argues that children and women were vital to creating and sustaining relationships between the U.S. and Korea. Stories like Kang’s, Woo explains, were part of a complex dynamic wherein Korean children were vital to showcasing American benevolence for vulnerable populations, while they also transgressed racial boundaries. By adopting Kang, Cordelle Lefer, a white woman, created a mixed-race family, further complicating racial hierarchy within and between the U.S. and Korea. Woo, Framed by War (2018).

10 Rougier, “The Little Boy Who Wouldn’t Smile.”
Six years after the initial Rougier article, Guinness used Kang as the symbol for Christians helping vulnerable people around the world.

Kang’s story, and more importantly, how Kang’s story was told, help us to understand the American public’s engagement with Korea in the 1950s. Rougier’s writing in *Life* demonstrates one of the ways that Korean suffering was narrated for the American public. His follow-ups on Kang, as well as Kang’s subsequent appearance in other fundraising materials, demonstrate the kinds of calls to action to which many Americans responded. And the fundraising and goods collecting that Kang’s story generated, as well as his own fate as a transnational adoptee, showcase the ways that Americans mobilized in respect to Korea.

Stories like Kang’s are indicative of the Korean War’s civilian homefront. Aside from the industrial mobilization and regulation, which was paltry compared to World War II, active support for the Korean War at home was dispersed and voluntary. The U.S. government tacitly and formally sponsored those voluntary contributions. The

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11 Paul G. Guinness, “One of the Hundred and Fifty Million” *World Communique* (July-August 1957), Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota Archives and Special Collections, Minneapolis, MN.

12 It was not only white people who took part in voluntary aid activity in Korea. Small community-level fundraising programs frequently cropped up in Black newspapers. Esther Park of the YWCA, who worked in Korea and published widely for American audiences about conditions there, was Korean-American. But many of the organizations that got a lot of funding, like the American Korean Foundation, were predominately white in leadership. *Life* readership was predominately white as well. James L. Baughman, “Who Read Life?: The Circulation of America’s Favorite Magazine,” in *Looking at Life Magazine*, Erica Doss, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).
result is what I call the affective homefront: Americans at home engaged Korea with voluntary care based on felt moral duty. Americans responded to appeals that called on their emotions. Furthermore, the emphasis on affective ties—“saving” Koreans—allowed for support for relief for Korea even among people who did not support American combat efforts. This affective homefront allowed for war mobilization in the Cold War world by making engagement with the war voluntary.

Ironically, the discourses and voluntary activities outlined in this chapter facilitated a softening of attention to the war in Korea even as they drew Americans’ attention to Korean suffering. Many Americans, especially white, middle-class, practicing Christians, engaged Korea through stories like Kang’s. They received messages about Korean suffering and took actions varying in scale from donating spare change to adopting Korean children. Though drastically different, both those actions were based on similar notions of Christian and civic duty, and were “person-to-person” gestures of care, even where programs required government support. This behooved the U.S. state, for whom the war did not go to plan, and non-governmental organizations who could capture Americans’ concerns for vulnerable Koreans to bolster their

missionary and service efforts abroad. Humanitarian relief for Koreans softened the brutality of the war and diminished attention to it, even as American individuals took responsibility for caring for Koreans directly harmed by the war.

This chapter explores three facets of the Korean War homefront. The first facet I analyze is American feeling about the Korean War. Though we cannot have a satisfactorily complete picture of how all Americans felt about U.S. intervention in Korea, we have the general contours based on contemporary polls. Showing the decline in positive feeling about the Korean War among Americans, I suggest that voluntary relief efforts served as a less-criticized alternative to support for military intervention. The second component of this chapter is my exploration of Americans’ activities in the service of Korean War mobilization. I explore the activities Americans took up on a voluntary basis to express their concern for Koreans and to act to relieve Korean suffering. American women took up projects specifically positioned as feminine, such as sewing and knitting clothing and blankets. And on a broader scale, caring activities positioned the United States as by turns paternal and maternal, protector and carer, disciplinarian and teacher. The third facet is narratives about Korea in the United States. Focusing mainly on materials centered around relief, recovery, and development in Korea, this chapter showcases the prominent role that care for Korea and Koreans played in state and non-state narratives about Korea. Press and propaganda materials often sought to mobilize Americans to donate goods, funds, and prayers by leaning on
imagery of suffering Koreans. I show how gestures toward Korea became more institutionalized even while Americans’ frustration over the war grew, as large voluntary agencies took charge of manufacturing and marshalling the public’s concern for Korea into specific and large scale projects.

Polling data from the 1950s show us that the Korean war was not popular. The federal government was well aware of this reality, and struggled with how to assure Americans that war in Korea was a sound investment. The State Department tracked trends in American opinion regarding Korea even before the war started. Reports from before the Korean People’s Army invasion of June 25, 1950 found that a huge majority of Americans had little regard, positive or negative, for Korea. A November 1948 poll found that only ten percent of those polled took a “great deal” of interest in Korea. Only thirty-eight percent of those polled had any interest.14 An April 1950 analysis of press clippings found that those Americans who had some interest in Korea were uncomfortable with President Syngman Rhee, opining that if the United States was going to invest in Korea, it ought to have greater control over Korea’s policies.15


Observers were wary of Rhee’s insistence on postponing the constitutionally-mandated May legislative election and concerned that the president would bypass democratic processes to maintain control. The Providence Journal opined “if nations accept our assistance, they must also accept the implied obligation to work with us for their own good for that desired aim.” Thus going into the war the State Department struggled to get legislators or the American public to pay attention to Korea, much less rate American policy in Korea positively.16

Immediately following the start of the war, positive opinion coalesced behind President Truman and what many saw as his swift and decisive action in coming to South Korea’s defense. The State Department Office of Public Opinion (OPO) press summary from the week of June 28 reported that “with relief bordering on enthusiasm, press, radio and Congressional observers hailed the President’s decision as offering the best opportunity for real peace and prevention of World War III.” The report further found that the Sripps-Howard Press, usually critical of Truman, applauded the President’s moves to give “the world’s peace machinery real meaning by throwing [the] full weight of [the] American Military behind the UN’s efforts to restore law and order

16 American security concerns were trained elsewhere. China was of course of great concern, given the recent withdrawal of the U.S.’s ally Chiang Kai-shek to Taiwan. And as would remain the case, the spread of communism in Europe and humanitarian concerns there drew greater American attention than Korea. NSC 68 and its attendant security policies did not center the strategic or ideological position of Korea. And yet, in the long run, as Masuda Hajimu and Samuel Wells have argued, it was the war in Korea that prompted the Truman administration and the Eisenhower administration after that to take the concerns of NSC 68 seriously. Masuda, Cold War Crucible (2014); Wells, Fearing the Worst: How Korea Transformed the Cold War (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).
in the Far East. Moreover, the Office of Public Opinion rejoiced that Korea was finally receiving robust press coverage where comment had previously been sparse. Reports from the State Department in July and August saw this trend continue: three quarters of Americans polled reported supporting American action in Korea, even as a majority of Americans expected the war to last more than six months. Promisingly, the State Department also reported seventy-seven percent of Americans rated U.S. policy in Korea positively, with thirty-three percent reporting they thought they were being asked to give just the right amount to support the war effort, and forty-four percent saying they thought they should be asked to give more. In the summer of 1950, it seemed that Americans were in support of war and prepared for one of substantial size. Moreover, it looked to the State Department as though Americans were prepared to contribute to the war effort.

Yet, as American awareness of Korea and the war’s broader implications deepened in the second half of 1950, opinions grew more complex. The U.S.‘s diplomatic


apparatus noted an increase in conversations regarding the expansion of American influence outside Korea: Americans were aware that the Korean War held strong implications for politics throughout East Asia. In a fall 1950 survey of opinion among prominent organizations, the Office of Public Opinion summarized, “statements indicate that a greater awareness of the causes of, and importance of, discontent among Asian peoples, is developing in organization leadership circles.” Some Americans had come to consider the Korean War not only a matter of protecting the peninsula, but also an ideological battleground for control in Asia. That battleground called for modes of “fighting” beyond warfare, including making life more comfortable for Koreans so as to keep Korea compliant with American policy and observers aware that the U.S. protected its investments.

In the same survey, the State Department found that leading American organization spokesmen had considered intervention in Korea beyond warfare, such as other forms of wielding influence there. The State Department noted that a number of these individuals “have advocated intensification or improvement of the U.S. foreign information program.” One spokesperson lamented that the U.S. fell behind Moscow

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20 Ibid.

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in the “battle of words.” Moreover, some Americans recognized that the battle might be won best with tactics besides dropping bombs. As the Methodist weekly *The Christian Advocate* put it: “[money] spent for radios, movies, libraries, and scholarships will produce better results than the same amount spent for planes and tanks.”

Relatively early on in the conflict, Americans sought means to fight communism in Asia beyond warfare. They saw the potential in what we might consider “soft” power: education and outreach that might lead Koreans into the U.S.’s liberal democratic embrace. Such development strategies would evolve alongside relief programs, the latter necessary to facilitate the former.

These State Department reports from the first several months of the war are telling in a number of ways. First, the U.S. government was concerned with what Americans thought about Korea. Marshalling popular support was vital for getting particular funding packages approved in Congress. But the State Department kept its finger on the pulse of American concerns over the war beyond specific legislation. The Cold War was an ideological battle, and the government sought to shape American

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21 That such perspective, particularly the notion of sponsoring scholarships, came from a Protestant publication is perhaps not surprising. As I discuss further in the chapter on the YWCA, it was common practice for churches to sponsor Koreans’ pursuit of higher education at Christian colleges in the United States. “Special report on American Opinion: Organization Opinion since the Invasion of Korea,” September 28, 1950, Korea—Miscellaneous 1950, Box 39: Public Opinion on Foreign Countries and Regions; Japan and Korea, 1945-1954, Office of Public Opinion Studies 1943-65, Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State, NARA II, College Park, MD.

22 Indeed, as I explore more in later chapters, programs of relief and development minded programs were often so reliant on one another that they were functionally indistinguishable.
ideology, including keeping track of where Americans stood on the fight in Korea, and providing material that could sway the skeptics.

Second, the State Department sought out the opinions of trade, community, and civic organizations, indicating an intentional approach to courting opinion shapers. They noted the opinions of leaders from militarist (and militarily experienced) veterans’ organizations, including the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, and American Veterans (AMVETS). (Public Opinion reports found that these veterans’ organizations sought to harness the crisis of the Korean War to push through federal universal military training legislation.) But the State Department also reported on opinions of organizations across the political spectrum, from the U.S. Junior Chamber Commerce to the Congress of Industrial Organizations (C.I.O).23 In the course of the war many Americans would engage Korea through activities with organizations or churches of which they were members. That the State Department sought the opinions of such organizations demonstrates a recognition of that trend. Finally, already in the first three months of the Korean War, organizations and the government recognized the importance of non-military activities in Korea. Though activities there

would remain tightly intertwined with military action, many Americans engaged Korea through softer forms of power.

After the first several months of the combat, American positive opinion regarding Korea waned substantially, a trend of which both polls and the State Department took note, adding domestic pressure to the growing quagmire that was the battle front in Korea. Gallup found that public support for American action in Korea hovered around fifty percent for the remainder of the war.24 The State Department reported that “public opinion surveys have shown that half, or nearly half, of the general public say… U.S. participation in the Korean War was a mistake.”25 According to most polling data, over the long run, support for the Korean War among Americans was at best, mild. For the most part, fluctuations hinged around changes in the course of the war, or the initiation of diplomatic measures. For example, “right” answers to the question, “Do you think the United States was right or wrong in sending American troops to stop the Communist invasion of South Korea” soared to 81 percent in September 1950, as the successful UNC landing at Incheon routed the North Koreans’ advance; the percent of people answering “right” fell to 55 percent as North Korean and


Chinese troops chased United Nations forces south in December.\textsuperscript{26} A solid base of around half the population, however, did not waiver in their support for American policy in Korea regardless of what transpired in the war. Seemingly their allegiance lay with the American government regardless of the path the government took.\textsuperscript{27}

That solid base notwithstanding, much of the American public was by 1951 vocally unhappy with Truman’s and the UN’s failure to produce a victory. This unhappiness hinged at least in part on what looked like the U.S.’s failure to protect its ally in South Korea. A small note on the last page of a State Department report analyzing shrinking support for American Korea policy stated, “The plight of the Korean people and their war-devastated land has evoked some deep concern. There has been almost unanimity of feeling that the UN allies, notably the U.S., must provide for relief and rehabilitation of the peninsula. Some sympathy for private relief measures has also been shown.”\textsuperscript{28} A throwaway line heralded a major trend in American engagement with

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\item\textsuperscript{26} John E. Mueller, “Trends in Support for the Wars in Korea and Vietnam,” \textit{American Political Science Review} 65 no. 2 (June 1971), 360.
\item\textsuperscript{28} “Main Trends of Opinion regarding the Korea Situation,” March 20, 1951, Main trends of opinion regarding the Korea Crisis, 1951-52, Special Report on American Opinion, Box 39: Public Opinion on Foreign Countries and Regions; Japan and Korea, 1945-1954, Office of Public Opinion Studies 1943-65, Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State, NARA II, College Park, MD.
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Korea. Where the public did not stand behind military action, it did stand behind American care for and responsibility to the people of Korea.

In July 1950, as the UN forces scrambled against the North Korean onslaught, President Truman addressed the nation, laying out the necessity of American intervention in Korea. His main points included the leadership of the United Nations—not the United States—in the conflict, and North Korea’s unprovoked assault. The President emphasized the rule of law, reminding the public that communists were to blame for the conflict, and that their aggression threatened the authority and peacemaking of the United Nations.²⁹

Truman was selling the American public on U.S. intervention. He emphasized that the war was a UN initiative and the U.S. was not solely responsible, militarily, financially, or otherwise. Truman called for mobilization of wartime industries and support for national security. The president also called for voluntary, individual sacrifices. Using gendered language and assumptions about who participated in consumer culture, Truman asked women—housewives, really—not to hoard essential goods and food. Not anticipating national shortages, Truman pointed out that hoarding caused unnecessary local shortages. He warned that unless people consumed

²⁹ Harry S. Truman, “Address to the Nation,” July 19, 1950, Address to the Nation Concerning... Box 18, President’s Personal File, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum, Independence, MO.
responsibly, he would have to implement price controls and rationing measures. With this warning, Truman made homefront participation a matter of civic and moral duty. Truman imagined this mobilization in explicitly gendered terms: women, the presumptive household consumers, were responsible for conscientious shopping for their families. They were thus also responsible for guiding their households’ civic participation and shaping their activities for the good of the nation. Despite Truman making it perfectly plain the United States would have to shift to wartime production and policies, this call to arms hardly included actual war mobilization for the average American. Rather, he asked Americans to fight the ideological battle, and the commercial one of buying responsibly. Very early on in the Korean conflict, the White House was already framing homefront participation as mild and voluntary, a trend that would only expand as the war carried on and popular support for it waned.

Other policy-makers joined in Truman’s call for mobilization on an individual basis. In early August, Undersecretary of State James B. Webb addressed Girls Nation, an American Legion Auxiliary-sponsored national program to teach high school girls about the processes of government and the importance of civic participation. Webb told the delegates (one young woman from each state) of the importance of American military intervention in preserving world peace. Girls Nation delegates also met with

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30 Ibid., 6.
Senator Margaret Chase Smith. Smith’s remarks to Girls Nation echoed Truman’s speech the previous month, urging the delegates to be examples against “hoarding and panic buying”: “You can crusade for self-control in the Nation’s great hour of need... You can be model examples of what we all should do and be able to suppress natural, understandable selfish desires and views when they are in conflict with the best interest of our country.” Meeting with these two officials, the girls received a clear message: the U.S. government urging some of its most promising young women to support the war effort through individual feminized actions. Smith and Webb ensured the Girls Nation delegates, and through *Washing Post* coverage of the meetings the American public, that individuals, and more specifically women, could make concrete contributions to promoting world peace through small alterations in consumer practices. As the war carried on, the executive branch and major publications maintained this milquetoast narrative.  

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32 Truman’s December 1950 address to the nation introduced a number of mandatory, systematic mobilization efforts: price controls, expanded troop deployment, conscription, major expansion of military budget and arms production. But Truman couched even these blatantly coercive measures in the language of individual Americans voluntarily doing their part. Harry S. Truman, “National Address” December 15, 1950, Korea and the Korean War, Box 197, President’s Secretary’s Files, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Truman Library, Independence, MO; Harry S. Truman, “Address to the Nation,” July 19, 1950, Address to the Nation Concerning... Box 18, President’s Personal File, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum, Independence, MO; “Truman Calls for Sacrifice in War Crisis,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 20, 1950.
Concern for Koreans came a bit later to this narrative. Americans had the opportunity, and responsibility, to do more than buy responsibly and support budget legislation that allowed for defense funds and measures meant to mitigate war profiteering. Americans could expand their individual duty into direct action: still small lifestyle adjustments, but ones that could be put to use to provide relief and rehabilitation to particular sets of vulnerable Koreans. The mentions of individual, voluntary calls-to-arms that Truman and others made at the start of the war became a more expansive call for Americans to contribute to relief efforts for Koreans.\textsuperscript{33} Indeed, they had the same macro logic and goals: Purchase responsibly and you’ll help the United States harness its resources efficiently in the war effort, and thus stop communist threats and maintain world peace. Provide care to suffering Koreans and you’ll diminish their vulnerability to communist infiltration, and thus stop communist threats and maintain world peace.

Though frequently using language about “responsibility” and “belt-tightening,” the executive branch was also forthright about its call to mobilize on behalf of Koreans. Anne Jones of the State Department practiced the kind of messaging the executive branch spread. In a speech to the Chaplains Service Corps in July 1951, Jones spoke of

\textsuperscript{33} Harry S. Truman, “National Address” December 15, 1950, Korea and the Korean War, Box 197, President’s Secretary’s Files, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Truman Library, Independence, MO.
the need of American women to sacrifice for the war effort in Korea. Jones had been stationed in Korea with the State Department when the war broke out. Considering herself an authority on the matter, Jones told the Chaplains Service Corps of the vital work of American missionaries in Korea,

“especially of medical missionaries and those teachers trained to lead Koreans toward a higher standard of living through sanitation, health education, care and training of children, etc. Much of the suffering endured in the daily life of Korea today is traceable to the lack of any living standards or knowledge as how those standards are to be reached.”

Jones urged American women to keep working with organizations so they might be ready to do direct relief work in Korea. Such initiatives, Jones speculated, “were great mediums for useful propaganda.” In this way Jones reflected a State Department

34 The Chaplain’s Corps consisted of representatives of various churches and denominations to provide spiritual council to servicepeople. Jones spoke to a room full of religious representatives embedded in the U.S. military.


attitude that person-to-person relief work could serve multiple purposes: mobilizing American women with specific and direct projects for Korea; rehabilitating war-torn Korea, and thus hopefully maintaining the emotional and physical health of an anti-communist ally; and generating a positive image of American charity in East Asia.

At the same time that the executive branch, with some cosigning from the legislators, pushed a narrative that Americans should make small personal sacrifices to help the government pursue “world peace,” Americans engaged in public discourse about the war’s efficacy. In February 1951, Clarence E. Moullette wrote to Secretary of State Dean Acheson asking why the United States was involved in Korea. Writing on behalf of his son, John, who was a Marine Corporal at Camp Pendleton, Moullette reported that many young GIs found the war a pointless waste of resources and American lives. The younger Moullette asserted that the morale at Camp Pendleton was very low, not because the men stationed there feared fighting, but because they thought their fighting would not yield productive results. Moreover, John Moullette lamented that the United States carried too much responsibility for the United Nations, and that other nations should be entreated to contribute more. The senior Moullette claimed he did not agree with his son’s complaints, but passed on the letter in the hope that the Secretary of State could address these concerns for sections of the population who
shared his son’s opinions. Acheson responded, leaning on now-familiar language about America’s duty to ensure world peace. Moreover, Acheson assured the Moullettes that Korea would be a bastion of international cooperation in opposition to communism, gesturing toward the strategic value of pursuing the war there.

At the State Department’s urging, newspapers across the nation published the contents of Acheson’s and Moullette’s letters. Acheson wanted to assure the American public that the war was a worthy cause: the opening paragraph parroted the Secretary of State’s claims that the United States military was in the Korea in order to stave off World War III. The State Department could thus release a controlled narrative about criticisms of the war, and showcase its responses to such criticisms. The tone of Acheson’s reply letter, moreover, was of commiseration with a father whose son was at risk and asking tough questions. Acheson opened his reply by recalling answering difficult questions about the Pacific War to his own college-aged son.

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38 Dean Acheson to Clarence E. Moullette, February 23, 1951, Folder: Dean Acheson to Clarence E. Moullette, Correspondence File, Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, Independence, MO.


40 Dean Acheson to Clarence E. Moullette, February 23, 1951, Folder: Dean Acheson to Clarence E. Moullette, Correspondence File, Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, Independence, MO.
Though Acheson was able to control the narrative’s presentation, readers had disparate reactions to the letters. Pauline Larson of Bridgewater, NY wrote Acheson to applaud his words. She thought the Secretary of State and President could go further to condemn communism, and should plainly state that the United States was on the side of God. Yet more Americans wrote to Acheson to express their displeasure with the correspondence. One concerned citizen, who identified herself as “A Mother, Wife, and one who knows how it feels to suffer from war while you and your kind profit by it,” found the whole Truman administration inept and corrupt. She lamented that the ill-considered police action “sends our future leaders to their death, or worse yet, to be quadruple amputees from frost-bite, maimed, blinded, and crippled otherwise.” Also displeased, Thomas R. Pullen told Acheson that his response letter to Moullette had been woefully inadequate. Pullen noted that his own son was serving in Korea, and that it was a tragedy and a crime that American men enlisted in the U.S. military were forced to fight a war on behalf of the United Nations. Mrs. Henry A. Gallagher was even more impassioned. In a letter to Clarence Moullette copied to Acheson, Gallagher accused the entire Truman administration of deep-seated corruption and communist infiltration. She


suggested that Acheson should be tried for murder for the loss of American lives in Korea. But in her somewhat incoherent tirade in which Gallagher accused the Truman administration of everything from negligence to murder, she rather astutely identified Acheson’s strategy in his letter writing: “You simply gave Dean Acheson an opportunity to give some more piously hypocritical propaganda to the American people.”43

Whether or not Acheson’s response to Moullette was “piously hypocritical,” it was propaganda. And just as the Truman administration recognized that shows of interpersonal cooperation in Korean War relief could have propaganda value in East Asia, Acheson took an interpersonal approach to spreading his narrative of American intervention in Korea. Acheson could have simply written a speech or statement that could be circulated in the press, which the Secretary of State and Truman both did plenty of, to be sure. He instead made a show of his thoughts on American intervention in Korea being a response to specific concerns from both an angry Marine and his worried father. By sending his and Moullette’s letters to the press, Acheson assumed his gestures to American responsibility to maintain world peace and prevent World War III would assuage Americans’ concerns. And indeed that particular narrative bore fruit: Corporal Moullette released a statement saying the Secretary of State had convinced him: “[Acheson] has me thinking that maybe we could have avoided World War II if we

had gone into Ethiopia. And I definitely think we ought to be in Korea.”44 The previously-skeptical Moullette now acted as spokesman for Acheson’s assertions that limited warfare and sacrifice now could save more substantial devastation later.

These exchanges are telling of the American state’s relationship to the public regarding the Korean War. First, they show that eight months into the war, millions of Americans questioned American intervention in Korea, and were willing to be vocal (and harsh) with their criticism. Second, this episode shows the government’s sensitivity to the skeptics: knowing full well that World War II was still fresh in Americans’ minds, Acheson attempted to assure them that the Korean War was about avoiding World War III, not stepping into it. Third, this episode demonstrates an important method through which Americans engaged the Korean War: letter-writing. In her correspondence to Clarence Moullette, Mrs. Henry Gallagher noted that she had written letters of complaint about the war to “Mr. Truman, numerous senators, newspapers, etc.”45

The American public remained lukewarm over Korea until the armistice, and thus across the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. Support for the war increased slightly after the 1952 election, but largely hovered around fifty percent, as it had for


45 Ibid.
almost two years. Eisenhower did not face the kind of scrutiny Truman had—for one thing, Americans had a good deal more faith in his competence where the military was concerned. Plus, Eisenhower inherited the war, whereas Truman had started it. Nonetheless the war remained unpopular, and some of the Eisenhower’s administration’s approaches to it turned out to be undesirable.

Under the Eisenhower administration, the executive branch still sought a balance between asking for American contributions to the war and recovery effort and courting positive public opinion. As the armistice took hold in summer 1953, the United States government made plans for South Korea and American efforts there. In July, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles made a trip to South Korea to assess American priorities in the war-torn country. As Secretary of State, Dulles’ primary concern with Korea was diplomacy. Over the course of his trip, he determined that the diplomatic priority should be maintaining amicable relations with the Republic of Korea. It seemed the best way to do this was to make a show of American support for South Korean recovery from the war: the executive branch asserted that financial and logistical support of rehabilitation measures would bolster American security, as the Korean populace would remain happy and thus stay away from communism. Such support would allow for American influence over the ROK—an important position with President Rhee being

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intractable as he was. Moreover, American backing for recovery projects, Dulles reasoned, would send a global message that the U.S. protected its investments.

These diplomatic concerns in mind, Dulles announced on August 2 that the U.S. would help in Korean recovery efforts by putting American troops to work. Dulles planned for GIs no longer in combat to go to work building roads, hospitals, and factories, or helping with recovery efforts wherever their skills could be put to use. UN recovery initiatives and non-governmental agencies would back this labor. And, as Dulles put it, the plan would give demobilizing troops something productive to do.

Initial reporting at the end of July indicated that the White House backed Dulles’ plan. As Eisenhower stated, “I am convinced that the security interests of the United States clearly indicate the need to act promptly, not only to meet immediate relief needs but

47 A month earlier, American newspapers reported that Eisenhower had sent an eleventh-hour missive to Rhee to force the South Korean president to agree to the terms of armistice. One New York Herald Tribune article from late June lamented Rhee’s undemocratic political maneuvers and his apparent desire to capture American resources to continue the war against North Korea. An offer of assistance for war recovery could keep Rhee appeased while not granting his wish to escalate the war. Homer Bigart, “Behind Rhee’s Obstinance” New York Herald Tribune, June 28, 1953, Korean War—Eisenhower Letter to President Rhee (South Korea) offering a mutual defense, Box 183, DNC Clippings, Subject File, Records of the Democratic National Committee, Truman Library, Independence, MO.


49 Ibid. General Richard S. Whitecomb used similar language about putting his demobilized troops “to work” in Pusan. American newspapers reported American GI’s misbehavior—fighting, drinking, harassing women in the street—after their December 1950 retreat. Whitecomb and Dulles may have shown their intent to keep their men busy in order to forestall American (and Korean) concerns about vice in the military. Sister Maria Del Rey, Her Name is Mercy, 176. Regarding vice among American troops see Woo, Framed by War, 37. For American military aggression against Korean civilians, including massacres, see Paul T. Chamberlin, The Cold War’s Killing Fields, 126-27; Bruce Cumings, The Korean War.
also to begin the long-range work of restoring the Korean economy to health and strength.”

The plan, however, was met with immediate public consternation. One article in the Denver Post in August 1953 noted that Congress was in an uproar over Dulles’ remarks, and explained the flaws the author perceived in the plan. Indignation at making combat troops into labor units raised the Denver Post author’s and several congresspeople’s concerns. Critics balked at putting “our boys” to work in the service of “Asiatics.” The Denver Post couched this critique in military preparedness: commentators distrusted the armistice and expected North Korea or China to commence an offensive at any moment. The author also claimed that if American combat troops were building roads, they were not training, and would be taken off-guard when the KPA attacked again, citing the North Korean invasion of 1950. The author claimed that American troops stationed in Japan had been unprepared to mobilize because their

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50 Dewey L. Fleming, “May Request More Relief Funds Later,” Baltimore Sun, July 28, 1953, Korean Truce—U.S. proposal to use American soldiers for rehabilitation work in Korea, Box 188, DNC Clippings, Subject File, Records of the Democratic National Committee, Truman Library, Independence, MO. The article phrased the issue this way, implying that the problem was not only putting soldiers to work in non-combat positions, but pulling them out of combat positions in order to labor on behalf of Koreans. The author implied that such a set up ill-befitted for relative power, position, and racial etiquette between the U.S. and Korea. “Those ‘Bring the Boys Home’ Blues,” Denver Post, August 5, 1953. Korean Truce—U.S. proposal to use American soldiers for rehabilitation work in Korea, Box 18, DNC Clippings, Subject File, Records of the Democratic National Committee, Truman Library, Independence, MO. Regarding the Denver Post article’s ability to reflect national attitudes: it was only one newspaper, and not a huge one at that. But the Democratic National Committee saw fit to collect it in its opposition press clippings.
work in Japan was too much infrastructure-building and not enough military training.\textsuperscript{52}  

_The New York Times_ also reported that the Pentagon was displeased with Dulles’ plan, asserting that the Secretary of State had spoken out of turn and should have cleared with Defense officials any plan that put American military personnel to work officials before announcing it to the public.\textsuperscript{53}

The author of the _Denver Post_ article offered a further critique of Dulles’ plan on the grounds that it damaged homefront support for the war. They reasoned that it gave Americans motivation to call for troops to be brought home. This, it seemed, would damage American and global security. Thus the author cautioned _Denver Post_ readers not to be hasty, and not to ask for American troops’ withdrawal from Korea.\textsuperscript{54}

Facing these concerns over Dulles’ remarks in the press and from a number of Republican and Democratic Senators, the President acted to clarify a more palatable plan for American troops to participate aid in relief and recovery efforts.\textsuperscript{55} Eisenhower came forward claiming the plan had been misunderstood. Eisenhower proposed putting Koreans to work under the leadership of American troops. Engineering and medical corps specialists would take the lead directing projects, and Koreans would do the labor.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.


Combat troops would stay combat-ready with regular training, though they could be
use to spearhead projects on a voluntary basis. Eisenhower’s plan clarified that no
American troops would be doing menial labor on behalf of Koreans.

Interestingly, the work Dulles suggested had already started on the ground in
Korea on a local, *ad hoc* basis. In Pusan General Richard Whitecomb put his unit to work
paving roads and digging irrigation. Whitecomb reasoned that these projects would give
his “boys” something productive to take up their time and energy.

This episode demonstrates how the military and the State Department carefully
shaped aid initiatives: they worked best—and were most palatable—when they had the
aura of being completely voluntary. American troops’ benevolent service, especially
toward children, was vital to American support for intervention in Korea. But as
propaganda, aid projects worked best when they appeared to be organically voluntary.


57 The quiet part here, of course, was that white troops would not being doing hard labor under or for
Koreans. Eisenhower thus further implied that the work to be done, much of it grueling, was more
appropriate for Koreans—American troops were above it by virtue of their racial, cultural, and national
positioning. See Jesse Kindig, “’War for Peace’: Race, Empire, and the Korean War.” PhD diss., (University

58 Maria del Rey, *Her Name Is Mercy* (1957), 176; “Armed Forces Assistance to Korea,” Motion Picture Films
Officer, 1860-1985, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abeline, KS, available online from
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npBi7CDI-4g.
Otherwise some Americans took them as an inappropriate use of American armed forces.\(^\text{59}\)

After all this, American troops did end up supporting recovery efforts in a systematic way. Armed Forces Assistance to Korea (AFAK) developed into large-scale, highly-organized projects. Army propaganda sold the projects to Americans by positioning the troops involved as builders, shapers of the land, thus highlighting technical competence and masculinity. The propaganda, in addition to emphasizing how projects saved children and women, drove home that the U.S. military partnered with voluntary agencies and Christian groups. AFAK propaganda thus touted the combination of state-backed and civilian voluntary initiatives. A propaganda video for AFAK also encouraged Americans to contribute to relief and reconstruction efforts in Korea as a means to support their troops, who were then doing much the same work Dulles had proposed in 1953.\(^\text{60}\)

\(^{59}\) Woo, *Framed by War*. As to troops being used “inappropriately”—some of the kinds of labor suggested in Dulles’ plan were not at all outside the realm of responsibility for American forces. Black GIs especially had been relegated to labor divisions in previous wars (it was only in Korea that they entered combat units en masse, and even so with some very problematic divisions of labor). But Black soldiers largely objected to such assignments, finding them degrading. It is then not a surprise that Americans objected to white soldiers being asked to perform labor for the benefit of a non-white populace in the Korean theater. See Kimberley L. Phillips, “Glory on the Battlefield: The Korean War, Cold War Civil Rights, and the Paradox of Black Military Service” in *War! What is it Good For? Black Freedom Struggles and the U.S. Military from World War II to Iraq* (2012), 99-127.

For most Americans, engagement with Korea took the shape of small actions that played out in their homes or communities. Some Americans reacted to developments in Korea by writing letters to newspapers or politicians, as was the case with Acheson and Clarence Moulette. Some people’s immediate response to articles like the one about Kang Koo Ri was to write a check and send it to whomever they could think of. Others engaged in more organized efforts to gather goods or money.

Women’s organizations took on many medium-sized aid efforts, mobilizing around both feminized labor and feminized narratives of duty to care for dispossessed Koreans. The American YWCA, for example, made Korea the number one priority for its “Chocolate for Christmas” program in 1951. The program mobilized youth groups to raise money and collect chocolate bars to send to children in “war-torn countries.” YWCA women at Carver Vocational School in Atlanta contributed six dozen chocolate bars.61 In 1952 American Legion Auxiliary Women knitted 38,000 sweaters for Korean children on Jeju Island.62 The following year they shifted focus to blankets, crafting small squares that could be packed and shipped in crates for the children to sew together


themselves. In 1953 the United Church Women of Atlanta collected 7,000 pounds of
bed and table linens to be shipped to Korea, East Germany and “other war-damaged
countries.” These projects varied vastly in scale: a small group of high school women, a
city-wide women’s faith organization, a national organization with the cooperation of
hundreds of chapters. But they each relied on relatively simple calls to action: buy a
candy bar, donate old linens, knit a small square. Individual activities were small in
scale and could be combined to create a larger impact—one ALA woman could knit one
square, which would be part of one blanket, which would be one of thousands of
blankets. That ALA woman might collaborate with only a handful of other women, but
the whole project could be kicked up to the National ALA, and the goods transported by
the U.S. Army. These projects also revolved around what might be considered
feminine activities: providing food, clothing, and household goods. Moreover, the ALA
and YWCA projects were targeted specifically at Korean children, creating a role for
American women as motherly figures from a great distance and with minimal sacrifice.

Large and well-organized projects attracted national attention and government
support. In a telling example, Girl Scouts of America orchestrated a “Kits for Korea”
project where members assembled bags of “simple necessities such as soap, pencils,

63 “Legion Auxiliary Knits for Korea” Washington Post, November 23, 1953, 23.

64 “Foreign Relations Part of Women’s ’53 Projects” Atlanta Constitution, January 3, 1954, 11E.

needles, thread, etc.” Scouts across the country participated, earning themselves substantial recognition. In March 1954, five Girl Scouts, including Jane Lee, “a Korean girl who was evacuated from Seoul early in the Korean conflict,” enjoyed an audience with First Lady Mamie Eisenhower at the Whitehouse. The national effort called on a relatively simple task from young Girl Scouts. Those efforts—every Scout contributing one kit—coalesced into a massive collection. The Girl Scouts turned over the kits to American Relief for Korea, who organized shipping them overseas. From the individualized collection of small items, the Girl Scouts made a flashy impact, and a select few got to share their achievement with the First Lady. The White House supported this relief effort through gestures that cost essentially nothing: only a show of interest and support from the First Lady.

Schools proved a useful organizing tool as children mobilized their friends for small initiatives, banking on adults being moved by kids’ gumptions, if not by Koreans’ plight. In October 1953, after seeing a brochure “soliciting aid for Korean orphans” a ten-year-old Chicago boy, Neal Samors, initiated “Halloween for children overseas” centered on trick-or-treating for goods and small gifts for Korean children. Samors enlisted some of his fifth-grade classmates, who donated a nickel of their allowance each


67 “Mrs. Layton Re-Elected Girl Scout President” Washington Post, October 22, 1953, 41.
to send collected goods to the AFSC in Philadelphia. The fifth-graders transformed a classic U.S. childhood activity into small-scale mobilization to help Korean kids. Samors utilized his position as a precocious ten-year-old to garner support from both his peers and adults. The children could capture adults’ attention and sympathy both by being cute and by projecting a moral example of empathy. The underlying logic behind Neal Samors’ fundraiser was that if he got to experience the fun and advantages of being a kid, Korean children should, too.68 Samors’ story, picked up in the local papers, telegraphed to Chicagoans the ease with which relief projects could proceed: all it took was a small amount of information about Korea, inspiration moving a person to act, and a bit of creativity to craft a project ones peers would respond to—so easy a ten-year-old could do it.

Small community initiatives encouraged larger, more systemic ones. Organizations like American Relief for Korea and the American-Korean Foundation took the lead on both conversations on Korea and relief projects. The AFSC mobilized children beyond Neal Samors’ grassroots efforts. In 1954, the AFSC fundraised for its milk distribution program in Korea by soliciting funds from children. For another campaign, advertising materials in the Quaker Newsletter for Boys and Girls, encouraged

68 “Neal and Pals to Show Heart on Halloween” Chicago Tribune, October 29, 1953, N_A11.
children to collect ten dimes which could buy four books or one supon (an abacus-like tool for arithmetic) for Korean school-aged children.\textsuperscript{69} Also, there seemed to be a good deal of confusion about where people should send things. Americans saw newspaper and magazine articles about suffering Koreans and sent a check or inquiry to the first person they could think of—which created a practice of organizations forwarding checks and goods.\textsuperscript{70} Organizations like ARK and AKF cropped up in part to handle this problem. The organizations could create demands for specific goods they needed, and collect contributions under one umbrella. Despite the confusion and the apparent need for larger organizations to handle important logistics like shipping and giving out relief goods, this local individualized model for aid to Korea made giving easy. Any American could take up a small task and contribute to the relief effort. On the other hand, this also made it easy for Americans to look away from Korea, feeling they had done their part as they left larger organizations and the state to orchestrate rehabilitation in Korea.

As Americans sought ways to show support for relief efforts in Korea, institutions arose to conduct centralized fundraising campaigns, disseminate propaganda about Korea, and coordinate between organizations working in Korea.

\textsuperscript{69} “Milk for Korean Children” Newsletter for Boys and Girls 75 (Spring and Summer 1954), Korea Administration Publicity, Country-Korea (Coms. & Orgs.—K.A.V.A.), Foreign Service, AFSC Archive, Philadelphia, PA.

\textsuperscript{70} Helen Wilson to Ada Gipson Regarding forwarding an inquiry about whom to send donated clothing to, April 20, 1953, Folder 1: Relationship-Liaison-Support to Voluntary Agency Programs (American Relief for Korea—Part A), Box 14, S-0526, United Nations Archives, New York.
Large scale organizations created for the purposes of aid to Korea stitched together community, church, and government relief programs to create an aid apparatus for Korea that was marketable and voluntary and that supplied Americans with feel-good imagery of the U.S.’s role in Korea even as it showcased the extreme damage of the war. These organizations had the capacity to organize other institutions, and to capture government investment and distribute it. They ultimately created unified and sanitized narratives about suffering and relief in Korea.

Like many of its affiliated organizations, American Relief for Korea, Inc. utilized solemn images of suffering Korean children and crowded, destroyed cities to harness support from Americans. American organizations working in Korea set up ARK for the purposes of cooperation with each other and the State Department. ARK focused principally on clothing collections. The theme of ARK’s 1952 clothing and funds drive was “Orphans of the Storm,” a metaphor that obscured war as a cause of suffering. Aside from the obvious implications of centering children as the victims of the Korean War, and the worthy beneficiaries of American charity, this fundraising theme positioned the entirety of the Republic of Korea as an orphaned child. Materials

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71 Ibid.

72 Member organizations included the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), and War Relief Services of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC). Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of this project describe in more detail the operations in Korea of each of those organizations. “Orphans of the Storm: Innocent Victims of Cruel and Unprovoked Aggression in Korea” Pamphlet, Folder 1: Relationship-Liaison-Support to Voluntary Agency Programs (American Relief for Korea—Part A), Box 14, S-0526, United Nations Archives, New York.
soliciting funds featured adults as well as children, clothed in tattered “rags.” As one advertisement put it, “These unfortunate victims of cruel Communist aggression in Korea... have only the rags they wear and the bundles on their backs as remaining possessions. Like tens of millions of destituted [sic] people in Korea, they need help desperately if they are to survive another bitter winter’s cold.”

The “orphans” mentioned in this campaign were not only the children of Korea, but the entire nation, victimized by malevolent communists, and in need of benevolent guardians. Thus the ARK campaign infantilized Koreans for the purposes of playing on American impulses to play the parent.

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73 “‘Old Clothes! Any Old Clothes Today?’: Let ARK Send Your Discarded Clothes to Korea’s ‘Orphans of the Storm,’” Country-Korea Committees and Organizations—American Relief for Korea, 1952 Country-Japan to Country-Korea (Reports), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

74 See Naoko Shibusawa offers the concept of “civilizational maturity,” the imperialist notion that a nation or population has the potential to grow and be worthy of its own self-determination. This concept was, of course, steeped in white supremacist notions of the backwardness of Asian populations. Naoko Shibusawa, America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.)
Founded in March 1952, The American Korean Foundation (AKF) created an effective formula for capturing political and financial support from Americans. The first chairman of the organization was General James A. Van Fleet, commander of the 8th Army and the United Nations in Korea from 1951 to 1953. Dr. Milton Eisenhower, the President’s brother, was honorary chairman. David Rockefeller served as treasurer. The Foundation thus brought in prominent businesspeople, politicians, and military figures to lead the organization. With them the AKF had the capacity to put on high-profile events, have the ear of important political figures, and get the president to make personal fundraising appeals to the American public. The AKF took an expansive view

75 “$1,000,000 is Raised for Aid to Koreans” New York Times, October 24, 1954.

of relief to Korea, with interest in projects in both the relief and reconstruction realms. Additionally, the founder of AKF, Palmer Bevis (previously publicity director of ARK) self-consciously assembled the powerful leadership team mentioned above. Bevins designed the organization to help Korea and was willing to shift its mission to fulfill whatever needs it could. Alternatively, Bevins was willing to make his organization useful to create and maintain a position as the authority on Korea in the U.S. In any case, Bevins displayed an entrepreneurial spirit that gave the American Korean Foundation a kind of flashiness that ARK never achieved. AKF did not request funds from the United Defense Fund, nor did they ship goods to Korea through the U.S. Military, making the Foundation substantially less reliant on the funding streams and governmental support that ARK had. AKF sought to build its institution and its reputation as a private organization, riding the wave of emphasis on voluntary aid, and further entrenching the role of voluntary aid in rehabilitating Korea.

Though the organization initially sought to position itself as a clearinghouse for Korean rehabilitation, AKF shifted gears toward relief projects in 1952. Rehabilitation could potentially play out longer-term than relief, which evoked images of an


78 Ibid.
immediate response to a present emergency situation. Moreover, by privileging rehabilitation AKF boosters could market projects in Korea as an investment rather than charity—that is, rehabilitation projects, in theory, built institutions that might yield industrialization, or an educated populace, or a U.S.-friendly business class in the long run. Of course the reality was that rehabilitation projects could not exist without some measure of relief—investment in factory building would be useless if millions of displaced peoples were living and dying in refugee encampments far from centers of industry. Schools were useless if children had to work all day to feed themselves. The Foundation quickly shifted gears, initiating a nation-wide fundraising “campaign for emergency relief and rehabilitation” in the summer of 1952. Though the AKF did not collect clothing donations in its first projects, leaving that to ARK, the Foundation indicated that it was interested in adding that to its domain. Thus by 1953 there was substantial overlap between the two organizations. This added to the labyrinth that constituted American efforts to send goods to Korea as organizations jockeyed for attention. At the same time, however, the American Korean Foundation emerged as an authority on aid a clearinghouse for propaganda and cultural displays about Korea.

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80 The American Friends Service Committee, for example, sought independent authority and funding for its Korea mission at the same time that it cooperated with AKF and the United Nations.
With uncertainty about the status of relief efforts after the armistice, and substantial overlap in projects with the American Korean Foundation, ARK closed down operations in early 1954. AFK stayed active through the end of the decade.

Aid to Korea remained a vital component of American charities and of foreign policy after the end of the war. The American Korean Foundation hit its stride after the war, as the armistice made it easier for Americans to work in Korea, and the war’s end made relief and recovery a priority.

With substantial resources, as well as some clever marketing materials, AKF orchestrated huge, national charity drives of the sort with which smaller organizations would have struggled. The organization had the capacity to corral a wide array of churches, civic organizations, and businesses, that small organizations simply did not have. In August 1954 nine thousand tons of supplies for the “Korean needy” arrived in Pusan, the result of a year of fundraising under the banner of the “Help Korea Train.” AKF regularly set and met massive fundraising goals. This was due in part to partnerships with businesses. AKF also succeeded because it built a strong network


among middle-class and wealthy Americans, hosting elaborate fundraisers and reaching out to titans of business. 83

In order to attract American support for their efforts, the American Korean Foundation crafted publicity and events designed to entertain while drawing participants’ attention to the good their contributions could do and to the resilience of Korea. The most famous of these events was the Korean Children’s Choir tour of April-June 1954. Founded in 1945, the Korean Children’s Choir was a prestigious organization, and, as historian Susie Woo shows, “a source of intense national pride in Korea.”84 The choir, comprised of twenty-five children ages six to twelve, toured more than fifty American cities, selling out shows across the country. The children sang songs in Korean and English, including a number of American folk and patriotic songs, and even some Christmas carols (despite their appearances in the U.S. taking place in the spring). The choir signed a record deal with Urania records, making the children’s music accessible to any American. For AKF the tour was a centerpiece of its campaign to raise ten million dollars for relief projects in Korea.85


85 Ibid.
Paul French of CARE, Inc. had advocated for initiating a tour by the Korean Children’s Choir since April 1952. The White House initially declined to authorize such a project over concerns about who would foot the bill. CARE, the State Department, and the White House negotiated about this for months in 1952. The State Department initially found that the propaganda value of the choir—which might combat abstract and racist notions Americans held about Korea—did not justify the logistical and material costs. By October 1952, the White House and the State Department came around, with both touting the value a tour could have for American morale. The holdout was Dr. Martha M. Eliot of the Children’s Bureau, who thought that Korean Children touring and performing without their parents was inappropriate exploitation.  

Amplifying the AKF’s campaign, publishing titan Henry Luce facilitated fundraising efforts: *Life* published a two-page photo spread showing off the smiling Korean children. Images showed the children in Korean and western garb, grinning and seeing American sites like the Statue of Liberty. The accompanying text highlighted the need for the AFK’s $10 million fundraiser, which would support “76,000 war orphans back home.” Coverage also showcased the children’s wonder as they encountered marvels like “escalators, Easter rabbits, and whirling helicopter hats—frills that many...

86 John F. Simmons to Mr. Connelley, July 7 1952, Korean Children’s Choir, Box 4, David D. Lloyd Files, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, Independence, MO.

87 “Korean Tykes Sing for Aid” *Life Magazine*, April 26, 1954, 42.
less fortunate children in Korea would gladly forego for a steaming bowl of plain rice."\textsuperscript{88} Like the record deal, the \textit{Life} coverage gave more Americans access to the choir than could attend their concerts.\textsuperscript{89} It also gave readers a glimpse at the Korean children involved. The images showed the children as curious, vibrant kids capable of singing for their supper and fitting into American life.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{figure6.jpg}
\caption{Children’s Choir members twirl in front of the statue of liberty. "Korean Tykes Sing for Aid" \textit{LIFE}, April 26, 1954}
\end{figure}

For Americans and Koreans alike, the Children’s Choir tour signified the strength of American and Korean voluntary collaboration. As Woo argues, for Americans the choir signified the ability of American charity to save Korean children

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Life} readership also tells us whom this tour and the underlying charitable work were catered toward. Though the periodical enjoyed fairly wide circulation in the 1950s, the bulk of its subscribers were white affluent young families. James L. Baughman, “Who Read Life?: The Circulation of America’s Favorite Magazine,” in \textit{Looking at Life Magazine}, Erica Doss, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).
from their wartime image as waifs. By welcoming, westernizing, and funding Korean kids, Americans could make them strong global citizens. For Koreans, the tour was a means to show the capacity of Koreans to be strong, and to demonstrate that Korean and American culture could exist in harmony—literally. For Americans the Children’s Choir acted as a reminder of a country still in need of U.S. support—the kids served as a charming reminder of how much good American support could do.90

The American Korean Foundation also found success in relief and reconstruction fundraising through high-profile events that mobilized the organization’s business and political connections. In August 1954, AKF hosted a dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York, drawing a crowd of 1500 people, including diplomats from the US, UN, and South Korea, as well as bosses from banks, movie production companies, and export corporations, and a slew of politicians, businesspeople, and reformers.91 The program included a speech by Syngman Rhee, a performance by child prodigy pianist Tong Il Han and the recorded music of the Korean Children’s Choir.92 These events operated to

90 Ibid., Susie Woo, *Framed by War.*


92 Syngman Rhee, “Text of the Address Delivered by Dr. Syngman Rhee, President of the Republic of Korea, at a Dinner Given in His Honor By the American-Korean Foundation,” New York, August 2, 1954, Korea Reports and Correspondence Aug.-Dec. 1954, Korea Correspondence and Reports June 1953-1959 (Box 5), YMCA International Work in Korea, Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota Archives and Special Collections, Minneapolis.
remind Americans of the still-urgent – without drawing too much attention to U.S. investment in the war or complicity in the country’s destruction.

Rhee’s speech to the crowd at the Waldorf, delivered a year after the armistice, served as a call to arms—literally and figuratively—for Americans. Rhee asked for the continued commitment of American funds, both through government spending and private charitable donations, to build and support infrastructure and relief in Korea. He also asked for American recommitment to military efforts, expressing doubt that the armistice would hold, and the belief that only a preemptive blow could stop a communist onslaught by the Soviet and China-backed North Koreans.93

The South Korean president couched his appeal for support in an affinity between Americans and South Koreans: As nations with strong Christian influence and staunch anticommunism, in Rhee’s reckoning, the U.S. and R.O.K. were uniquely positioned to fight the Soviets’ growing global influence. “Your clothing has kept our people warm during the cold of winter, and your other activities have given them immediate material hope that they need so desperately,” Rhee said. “But I think that the spiritual bond that the [American Korean Foundation] and other agencies have forged between Americans and Koreans is of even greater consequence.” The cultural displays of Tong Il Han and the Korean Children’s Choir drove his words home. Rhee’s message

93 Ibid.
was clear: by helping Korea you are helping children, and people longing for a free world—just like you. Rhee’s presence facilitated AFK’s fundraising through the prestigious event. And his remarks drove home the vitality of sustained voluntary aid projects in not only helping Koreans, but also solidifying American good will and influence.

Syngman Rhee and the AKF built the success of the Children’s Choir tour to host an extravagant event catered toward top-tier donors and supporters of the cause. Staunchly right-wing and openly asking for more American investment in an already costly war, Rhee was not a sure bet as a speaker. But the recording from the Children’s choir and the other cultural displays at the dinner softened Rhee’s hard words. The logic of humanitarianism made Rhee’s militarism more palatable. Affective ties—care for Korean children and appreciation for their cultural displays—worked to draw attention to the plight of Korea, to shape American policy, and to garner support for Syngman’ Rhee’s government.

To keep attention on Korea, the AKF also cajoled businesspeople into contributing resources without an official government mandate to do so. To the

California Theatre Owners Association in 1955, former Deputy Chief of Staff of the Eighth Army General Charles W. Christenberry remarked that Korea “must be preserved as a bulwark of freedom in Asia to prevent the spread of communism.” Speaking as the head of the American-Korean Foundation, Christenberry sought to maintain support for the AKF’s efforts. But the American-Korean Foundation was not the only force trying to keep up aid efforts in Korea: President Eisenhower himself requested that the California Theatre Owners be entreated to show a short film requesting funds for aid to Korea from theater patrons during Easter Week of 1955. In a similar fundraiser American theatregoers had collected more than a million dollars for Korean relief efforts the previous year. With General Christenberry at the helm of the American-Korean Foundation and Eisenhower asking for donations, this small scene showcases how the U.S. military, the executive branch, charitable organizations, commercial interests, and the American public all collaborated on relief for Korea even after the fighting had stopped. The collaboration sustained public interest in caring for Korea and kept donations coming. What was positioned as a call for relief efforts contained a gesture toward broad security implications—Christenberry intimated that Theatre owners voluntarily doing their part in Korea could stop the country from falling to communism. Ultimately, the American Korean Foundation thus functioned as a diplomatic and propaganda organ, as well as a charitable one, convincing Americans to

care about Koreans, delivering the understanding about the nation through filters of
devastation, cuteness, and deservingness.

Relief projects in Korea naturally attempted to capture American compassion
and mobilize it for action—typically in the shape of collecting funds or goods. The story
in Life about Kang Koo Ri was ostensibly not meant to function as a solicitation for
funds, and yet it worked that way: orphanages in Korea received an outpouring of gifts
for children, donors frequently citing Rougier’s article as inspiration to give. Moreover,
fundraising initiatives latched on to Kang’s story, and even reproduced his image to
coax funds for relief projects around the world, not only in Korea.16

Kang’s story had many of the trademarks of solicitations of funds for
Korean relief projects. It was a story about a vulnerable—and adorable—child. Children
played an essential role in making Korea a legible and worthy cause for Americans.17
Korean children, especially those positioned as orphans, required protection, and
Americans could act as parental figures, providing kids—kids victimized by communist
aggression—with protection. Moreover, if Americans acted as parental figures to Korean
children, Americans could also be teachers, training the next generation of Korean kids

16 Paul G. Guiness, “One of the Hundred and Fifty Million” World Communique (July-August 1957), Kautz
Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota Archives and Special Collections, Minneapolis.

17 Susie Woo, Framed by War.
to be well-disciplined soldiers, good workers in a capitalist market, participants in a suitably democratic society, and amenable to American “western” influence. “The Little Boy Who Wouldn’t Smile,” in addition to narrating Kang’s tragic life, showcased camp mascots—young Korean boys who hung around American military camps. “Cowboy” clothing, toys, and games were popular among Korean camp mascots. Showing these smiling boys in western garb, Rougier applauded how military and civilian cooperation brought playful American aesthetics to Korean children with tragic lives. 98

Like many fundraising materials, “The Little Boy Who Wouldn’t Smile” carefully showcased both the utter tragedy and devastation of the war and the resilience of Koreans. Rougier used graphic imagery in describing Kang’s situation: soldiers who found the boy could smell death in his house, and they discovered him huddled next to his mother’s decaying corpse. When the soldiers carried the crying Kang away from his house, his whole village was destroyed and abandoned. Rougier universalized Kang’s suffering to express the suffering of all the residents of the Republic of Korea. Though Rougier wrote about the unique devastation in Kang’s life, he was just one among thousands of Korean children suffering from the war—a fact from which Life did not look away. Indeed, in the same article Rougier told the stories of several other Korean children. Kim Kwi Nam, whose parents had died when North Korean and Chinese

forces had taken Seoul in early 1951, had turned to begging, becoming a “hardened scavenger” before being picked up by American MPs. Kim Hyun Chung’s entire family had died from artillery near Uijongbu while he was out begging for rice. Lee Kum Soon’s parents had died as they made their way south out of Seoul in the huge stream of refugees. Each of these examples, like Kang, illustrated danger and devastation in the land, the loss of parents, and Korean children having to roam around and fend for themselves.  

In this way Rougier’s reporting tracked with many of the propaganda materials Americans received about Korea. It was a country thoroughly devastated, made evident through Kang’s heart-breaking frown. But like so much of the evidence of havoc in the Korean peninsula, the macro causes of violence were by necessity obfuscated. While it was easy enough to point a finger at North Korea (and by extension, it seemed to most Americans, to Beijing and Moscow), there was no attention paid to the possibility that UN or K.P.A. artillery killed the families of Kang Koo Ri, Kim Hyun Chung, or Lee Kum Soon. War, in Rougier’s analysis, was the ultimate culprit for Kang’s and his compatriots’ suffering, and blame for that fell at the feet of North Korea. This analysis gave Americans an easily legible cast of character through which to understand the devastation in Korea: innocent Korean children were the damsels in distress, communist 

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100 Ibid.
forces were the villains, and Americans—through the state, backed by civilian’s voluntary contributions—were the knights in shining armor.

Korean resilience was also an important part of the calculus in telling stories about Korea. Helping Koreans was a worthy cause not only because they were deserving, suffering, innocent victims, but also because Koreans could make good on American investments in their recovery. Conveying Koreans as tough—the tragic children about whom Rougier wrote found their strength and their joy—showed that they were capable of recovery from the war’s devastation. “The Little Boy Who Wouldn’t Smile” ended with Kang smiling—but that was only the beginning of his journey.\textsuperscript{101} Through American intervention and sustained contributions, children like Kang could take steps toward being healthy, whole, and productive Koreans.

Not only did various charitable organizations use Kang’s image for fundraising initiatives, \textit{Life} editor-in-chief Henry Luce explicitly authorized the use of Rougier’s article for fundraising purposes.\textsuperscript{102} Luce agreed to reprint and distribute the article (which he did in pamphlet form) as part of an American Relief for Korea clothing collection campaign. As Luce wrote in his letter to National Chairman of ARK Douglas Fairbanks, “It is our hope that little Kang Koo Ri, and thousands of children like him,

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{102} Paul G. Guiness, “One of the Hundred and Fifty Million” \textit{World Communique} (July-August 1957), Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota Archives and Special Collections, Minneapolis; “Kang Koo Ri and His new Face,” \textit{Life}, March 17, 1952, 37.
together with their parents, may not have to suffer through another Korean winter without adequate warm clothing.” Notably, lack of warm clothing was not one of the dangers Kang or any of his compatriots faced in Rougier’s original article. Luce thus betrayed the flexibility of stories like Kang’s: suffering that was not his could be easily evoked by Kang because American publications positioned him as the ultimate example of vulnerability. There was no evidence that Kang lacked an adequate jacket or shelter, and indeed Rougier explicitly pointed out that one of the soldiers who found Kang gave him an Army jacket. But Life had painted a picture of Korean suffering so complete and abject that Americans could imagine any suffering, any need, applying to this small boy.103

Kang ultimately received the most extreme and literal example of American care: adoption. Given that international, interracial adoptions were ad-hoc, with few institutional or state instructions to follow, and required substantial governmental sponsorship until the 1960s, it was a bold move for Cordelle Lefer to take those uncertain steps to adopt Kang. Americans’ adoptions of Korean children grew in the wake of the Korean War (and even more as time went on), but it was still an usual move.104 Lefer showed a much greater sustained attention to Koreans and their suffering

103 Henry R. Luce to Douglas Fairbanks, August 31, 1951, Folder1: Relationship-Liaison-Support to Voluntary Agency Programs (American Relief for Korea—Part A), Box 14, S-0526, United Nations Archives, New York.

104 Woo, Framed by War; Oh, To Save the Children of Korea.
than most Americans. Adopting a child was a far cry from knitting afghan squares. And yet those acts were predicated on the same impulses. Cordelle Lefer was moved by propaganda imagery with Kang’s photo on it. She felt compelled to act as a woman and as a Christian. She put her maternalist impulses to literal use to become Kang’s actual mother, showing him care and teaching him to grow up as an American kid.\(^{105}\) And she did so in a way that was one individual American reaching out to one specific Korean.

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**Figure 7:** Kang on a carousel. In 1956, Life showcased Kang’s new American life with his adopted mother, depicting him smiling and experiencing all the joys of life in California away from the destruction and despair in Korea. "A Famous Orphan Finds a Happy Home" Life, May 14, 1956.

Affective ties—Americans feeling for Koreans—softened displeasure at the
course of the war. Americans experienced those affective ties through campaigns
displaying Koreans as deserving, resilient, appealing, and desperately in need. And
Americans acted on those feelings through voluntary actions of vastly varying scale.
Thus the Korean war shaped approaches to making empire in the Cold War—a sleight
of hand drawing attention away from legally dubious and unpopular military action,
and toward warm and personal displays of affection. The U.S. government tacitly and
formally supported aid measures that centered voluntary, person-to-person activities
that depicted a benevolent relationship between Americans and Koreans. These
measures allowed the U.S. to sidestep sticker questions of legality and imperial
investment. The U.S. could thus eschew its part in the destruction of Korea, and also
sidestep citizens’ concerns that the U.S. had invested too many lives and tax dollars in a
little-cared-for country.
Charitable contributions were different. They went to Americans’ churches and mission
organizations who carried out these affective ties on the ground level, in the process
shaping their own approach to influencing the world, and Korea’s future recovering
from the war.

God chooses His instruments with care, like a surgeon selecting the exact grade of suture he wants for a specific job. At that (Sister smiled at the thought), a good Superior is rather like a suture. She binds the parts together, going through them and over and under them. She must have resiliency as well as strength; otherwise, she’ll tear through both parts and leave them wounded. In the end, she disappears, losing herself in the growing flesh, and yet leaving her mark upon the healthy tissue. And always, she must remember that she is only catgut in the hands of God.¹

--Sister Maria del Rey

Elizabeth Reid wound her way through the crowd packed into the narrow alleys of Pusan on a chilly November evening in 1953.² The Australian journalist had spent the better part of two decades wandering around Asia, and thought she recognized same

¹ Sister Maria del Rey, Her Name is Mercy (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1957), 146. “Catgut” here refers to the material historically used to make medical sutures (as well as strings for some musical instruments and netting on tennis rackets), made of fibers found in the lining of mammal intestines.

² Since 2000, official Romanization has had the city spelled “Busan.” Throughout this chapter I use the McCune-Reischauer Romanization “Pusan” because that is how the historical documents from the 1950s spelled it.
expressions of wariness, hunger, and need on the faces of the Koreans here that she’d seen in other refugee centers. This crowd, what Reid had heard referred to as “the longest charity line in the world,” pressed toward the center where the teeming alleys met: The Maryknoll Sisters’ Clinic.³

As Reid made her way to the Clinic, noting that the line to receive relief goods was not moving, she saw a tall American woman in full white habit at the center of the throng whisper something to the local doctor beside her. In Korean he announced to the crowd: “We have no more medicines to give you. We cannot take care of any more today.” He promised that if the people dispersed quietly, the Sister beside him would distribute milk powder for the children. Reid thought she might see a riot. But no, the crowd disbanded in an orderly fashion. And Reid saw her chance to speak to the woman so clearly in charge.⁴

³ Sister Maria del Rey, *Her Name is Mercy* (New York: Charles Scriber’s Sons, 1957), 1. Reid relayed this story of visiting the Maryknoll Sisters’ Clinic to Sister Maria del Rey Danforth for her 1957 book project. *Her Name is Mercy* functions partially as a biography of Sister Mary Mercy Hirschboeck during her time as head of the Maryknoll Pusan Clinic, but is largely the story of the early years of the clinic itself. *Her Name is Mercy* is a valuable source for many of the stories in this chapter, as it draws on interviews with Sisters who worked in the clinic as well as publications and mission diaries from the time. However, Sister Maria del Rey was a publicity specialist for the Maryknoll Sisters. As such *Her Name is Mercy* is largely hagiographical, and even though many of the stories Maria del Rey tells are verifiable through contemporary news articles or Maryknoll Sisters archival documents, some of her accounts are suspect in either detail, or the meaning that Maria del Rey gleans from them. Nonetheless *Her Name is Mercy* is valuable both for the stories it tells, and for how shows the story of the mission that Maria del Rey—and the Sisters more broadly—were interested in telling the American public.

⁴ Maria del Rey, *Her Name is Mercy*, 2.
This was Sister Mary Mercy Hirschboeck, medical doctor and head of the Maryknoll Sisters' Pusan clinic. Reid inquired about the conditions in the clinic and in Pusan. Sr. Hirschboeck speculated that the medical facilities saw two thousand patients every day. Pusan, after all, was overcrowded: Hirschboeck claimed the city had been home to 250,000 people before the war, and now estimates placed the population around 1.5 million, with refugees still pouring in.\(^5\) Beyond sheer magnitude of needy people arriving, Sr. Hirschboeck described the challenging cases the sisters treated: Tuberculosis, whooping cough, smallpox, typhus.\(^6\)

As they spoke, walking through the clinic’s dusty garden, Reid and Hirschboeck heard wailing beyond the compound’s walls. Sr. Hirschboeck opened the gate and found small bundle on the ground. It was a baby. Without saying a word about it, the Sister secured the infant against her chest under her coat—an Army coat dyed black, Reid noticed.\(^7\)

\(^5\) Hirschboeck, Reid, or Sister Maria del Rey may have overestimated or embellished here: the figures I found had the population of Pusan at 474,000 in 1949, and 105,000,000 by 1953. This was nonetheless a striking population increase. Even more striking, the population of Pusan jumped by some estimates from 474,000 in 1949 to 948,000 in 1950—doubling in one year. Tai Hwan Kwon, Hae Young Lee, Yushik Chang, Eui-Young Yu, *The Population of Korea* (The Population and Development Studies Center, Seoul National University, 1975), 67; World Population Review, “Busan Population Data,” [http://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/busan-population/#popData](http://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/busan-population/#popData) (data from the UN’s World Urbanization Prospects).

\(^6\) Ibid., 3.

\(^7\) Ibid., 3.
As the women carried on their conversation, Hirschboeck explaining where the money and goods to run the clinic came from, she carried the baby into the compound’s small house, the facility to care for infants before they could be transferred to orphanages. She checked the child’s ears, eyes, and mouth as she spoke, and then went to a small sink and turned on the tap. Hirschboeck paused from the conversation to pour water on the baby’s head. She then recited: “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Hirschboeck handed the child off to a Korean woman working in the small house without a word about what had just transpired. She went back to her interview.8

This chapter examines the work of the Maryknoll Mission Sisters of St. Dominic in Korea in the 1950s. In the mid-twentieth century, the Upstate New York-based order orchestrated missionary service work around the globe.9 In Korea, the Sisters’ work centered around medical relief in Pusan, the port city in Southeast South Korea that served as the international and military hub during and following the war. Reading

8 Maria del Rey, Her Name is Mercy, 5.

9 In her work on the Maryknoll Sisters, Amanda Izzo succinctly explains the language at play here: “In the canonical taxonomy of the Catholic Church, as an apostolic, rather than contemplative group, the Maryknoll Sisters are a religious congregation, not an order, and members who have taken vows are called sisters rather than nuns.” As such in this chapter I refer to people who have taken their vows as part of the Maryknoll Sisters as “women religious.” I also use shorthand of “Sisters” (capital S) to denote the Maryknoll Sisters as a group. Amanda Izzo, Liberal Christianity and Women’s Global Activism (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2018), 223.
beyond the stories that the order told about itself, I show how the Maryknoll Sisters exemplified the government-church partnerships that became characteristic of Korean War relief and humanitarian aid. The Sisters relied on both private and military investments to provide necessary infrastructure and funding for their projects. At the same time, the U.S. and Korean militaries and governments relied on the Sisters to provide relief for a war-created refugee crisis in the Pusan area. This cooperation built up public-private partnerships that facilitated shifting responsibility for taking care of Koreans to civilian organizations.

This chapter showcases how the Maryknoll Sisters, more so than other Christian organizations working in Korea at the time, understood their medical work and patriotic service through their duty to God. They viewed themselves as a tool of the divine—“catgut in the hands of God,” ready to stitch together the wounds of the world. As the story of the abandoned baby receiving the sacrament of baptism shows, for the Maryknoll Sisters, medical and spiritual care were one and the same. Care was Christ’s teaching—and would win souls to God. This evangelizing endeavor was naturally a basic underlying premise of missionary work. In the context of the 1950s, it was also a political pursuit as anticommunists framed the Cold War as a struggle to save the world from “Godless” communism. Moreover, this faith fueled an entrepreneurial spirit

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10 On the spiritual Cold War, see William Inboden, Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Elizabeth Edwards Spalding, The First Cold
among the Sisters. In couching their work in their duty to God, the Sisters made an argument for their unique qualifications, bolstering their reputation and garnering symbolic and material support from American civilians and the military.

The first section of this chapter traces the establishment and growth of the mission, highlighting how that growth relied on military sponsorship. I narrate how the military and the Maryknoll Sisters cooperated with one another, and how that reliance grew as the Sisters’ mission became more expansive and took on more projects. The second section contends with the question of why the Sisters did their particular work. It was dirty, lacking resources, and on rare occasions deadly. I offer that the Sisters’ faith animated their service; their maternalist religiosity set the stage for their medical work in Pusan. Furthermore, as I show throughout the chapter, the Maryknoll Sisters’ work in Korea and their position of favor with the Army granted the women a great deal of positive reputation which they used to grow their projects inside and outside Korea. I then turn to ways that the Sisters drew others into their mission, showing how the Sisters asked for and received support for projects from individual GIs, civilians, and Americans at home. This section interrogates the language and imagery the women religious used to illustrate Korean suffering and deservingness in the war-ravaged,


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communist-threatened Pusan for clues as to broader cultural meaning and impact. This chapter thus shows how missionaries in the war relief field could both operate in good faith, and utilize strategy that advanced their position.

The Maryknoll Sisters offer a window into the relief landscape in to Korea, but also into American life for women in the 1950s. The Sisters were both exceptional and demonstrative of gender, of Christianity, and of American culture in the mid-century.11 Exceptional because they were a vanguard of American Catholic women abroad. Exceptional because their role as Catholic clergywomen insulated them from the problems and expectations that other American women—including missionary women—faced working out in the world in the 1950s, even as Catholicism set them apart from their Protestant peers.12 Demonstrative because Maryknoll Sisters’ experience abroad, their influence as professionals, as women religious, as anticommunists, were very much of a particular time. Maryknoll Sisters’ ideals tracked with broader early Cold War politics valuing militarism and Christianity as tools to fight communism; their missionary work mapped onto a larger trend of American civilians being out in the

11 Amanda Izzo, Liberal Christianity and Women’s Global Activism.

world; and their role as professional women tracked with trends of women in the workforce after World War II.¹³

The Maryknoll Sisters’ roots as a missionary organization broadly and in Korea specifically equipped the women religious with the motivation and skillsets to engage relief work in Pusan. Mary Josephine Rogers initially founded the order in Ossining, New York in 1912 as an auxiliary to the Maryknoll Brothers and Fathers religious community, started six months earlier in 1911. In 1920 the Sisters received approval from the Vatican to form a religious institute, and they began heading foreign mission projects on their own, with sponsorship from small donations primarily from Catholic parishes and organizations.¹⁴ Their commitment to Korea predated the Pusan Mission. In 1924 six Sisters landed in Wi Ju, Korea (now North Korea) and began proselytizing. In 1933, Sister Mary Mercy Hirschboeck established the first Catholic medical facilities in

¹³On the career front the Maryknoll Sisters did not face quite the same conditions as their lay counterparts—amidst the post-war reorganization of gender hierarchies (i.e., middle-class women being pushed out of the workplace), Maryknoll Sisters were able to maintain their professional status. Their inability to wed provided quite a lot of insulation from other gender norms. However, they had to be careful about articulating how they fit into society despite being unwed, working, childless women. On the complexities of women in the workplace following World War II, too complicated a history to adequately survey here, see Joanne Meyerowitz, “Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958,” *Journal of American History* 79, no. 4 (March 1993): 1455-1482.

¹⁴Maryknoll Missions arose at the same time that the United States was developing an independent Catholic identity. The U.S. had only recently (in the late 19th century) been removed as a target region for missionary work and started sending missionaries. The Maryknoll Fathers, Brothers, and Sisters, were early adapters among American Catholic missionaries, and thus formed a missionary identity firmly rooted in being American. Penny Lernoux, *Hearts on Fire: The Story of the Maryknoll Sisters*, centenary edition, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012).
Korea. The Maryknoll Sisters left Korea during World War II as Imperial Japan heightened its political control on the peninsula. They returned during the U.S. military occupation of South Korea (1945-1948) and worked to establish a permanent mission in Pusan. The mission compound, centered on the medical services at the clinic, opened in April 1950—and was forced to shut down when American sisters were evacuated in June. In the first years of operation the Maryknoll mission had among its ranks two medical doctors, a pharmacist, a lab technician, and many nurses. Medical care lay at the heart of the Sisters’ fundraising, and was the basis of the relationship the Sisters had with the military in Pusan.

Given their tradition of work in Korea, the Sisters eagerly pursued a return to their mission after the start of the Korean War. After the Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic were evacuated to Japan when the war broke out in June 1950, Hirschboeck personally wrote to General MacArthur to ask him to allow the sisters to return and serve Korea—an appeal the Commander-in-Chief of the United Nations Command granted. When in 1951 Sr. Hirschboeck landed in Seoul with two other Maryknoll Sisters, a handful of reporters and American federal agents, and many large crates of

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16 Timeline, Folder 1: Histories—Maryknoll Sisters, Box 1, Series 1: Korea, Korea History 1932-2007, Maryknoll Sisters Archives, Maryknoll Mission Archives, Maryknoll, NY.
Army supplies, it marked a triumphant return for the 48-year-old Sister. Sr. Hirschboeck had left her clinic in the North in 1940 due to medical problems and during her stay in the U.S., Japanese forces attacked American bases at Pearl Harbor, Philippines, Guam, and Wake Island, setting off the Pacific Theatre of the Second World War. Thereafter unable to return to Korea in the midst of the war, Hirschboeck spent most of the 1940s running a clinic in Bolivia. It was with Hirschboeck’s guidance that the Maryknoll Sisters so enthusiastically sought reentry to Korea.¹⁷

The Sisters’ Pusan mission began at a moment of change for them and other missionary groups. The 1950s was a time of transition for American Christian groups. As many mainline Protestant denominations questioned their doctrine, especially with regard to international missionary work, evangelical churches and missionaries went abroad with great moral clarity and a mandate to convert the world over.¹⁸ High Protestants began to favor service-oriented missions over proselytizing, while

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evangelicals put heavy—sometimes singular—priority on conversion. As Catholics on the outside of both “Protestant” and “evangelical” categories, the Maryknoll Sisters in the 1950s understood their missionary doctrine differently. For the Sisters, conversion and service were utterly and unproblematically intertwined. Service was a means to spread God’s message, and spreading God’s message was essential to saving souls as service was to saving bodies. On any given day they could put emphasis on one or the other for the purposes of gaining support, whether from Catholics or non-Catholics.

Catholic theology was in flux in the 1950s as well, with changes in store that further set the stage for Maryknoll ascendancy in Pusan. In the mid-twentieth century, Catholicism grew in influence and popularity as American anti-Catholic sentiment softened, creating the conditions for Catholic institutions to seek greater participation in the nation’s spiritual and political life. At the same time, internationally the Church was going through some theological transformation. In 1943, Pope Pius XII issued an encyclical on the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ which shifted the language

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around which Catholic missioners approached the world. The encyclical explicitly called for an embrace of all souls regardless of race or national origin, a move away from a paternalist racial hierarchy which had previously pervaded Catholic missions. The encyclical, which historians also credit for the development of Catholic human rights discourse, affirmed that “humanity was united by the living presence of Jesus in each soul.”

Catholics were thus called to respect the humanity of all as the manifestation of Christ’s continued presence on earth. This notion, though not radical (especially in the context of Protestants’ moves toward fundamental human rights), facilitated mission work that centered each human’s autonomy and rights within their specific life context. The encyclical thus called for a less prescriptive missionary approach: the Church should not be imposing values or hierarchies except where tied to doctrine.

Catholic doctrine still saw Christ as the only salvation (which is to say, still centered conversion as the ultimate path to “saving” people), the notion of the Mystical Body of Christ demanded greater respect for the varied cultures of the world—and less racism from missionary institutions.

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23 Such a restriction still allowed a huge amount of leeway regarding how missionaries intervened in people’s lives—missionaries could frame most aspects of people’s lives, most hierarchies and values, as being tied to doctrine.

The shift in Catholic doctrine further bolstered the Maryknoll Sisters’ position in society and understanding of their spiritual significance. The encyclical affirmed Maryknoll’s practice of missionary work that sought immersive labor in local missions. The Maryknoll Sisters’ core philosophy in all their operations was to conduct missions specific to particular local needs and tradition. They sought to uphold a respect for local practices in the hopes of empowering locals. To develop their faith and to develop their communities, the Sisters valued robust knowledge of their fields of operation. In Pusan, Sisters spoke Korean, learned about Korean history and culture, ate Korean food, and adopted some Korean clothing. Maryknoll doctrine saw this search for understanding and community cooperation as an essential way to celebrate the mysteries of the church. But it also had its practical uses: to Koreans, this practice made the Maryknoll Sisters accessible and respected, which in turn gave the Sisters optimal access to Koreans. To non-Korean, especially American, observers, it endowed the Sisters with an


25 Sister Maria del Rey, Her Name is Mercy (1957), 50.

aura of humbleness and expertise, both of which made them worthy recipients of relief support.27

It was from this vantage point that the Maryknoll Sisters built their mission to Korea in the 1950s. The Maryknoll Sisters combined their evangelizing spirit with their relief work expertise to carve out a significant space in the humanitarian landscape in Korea.28 Though the war was devastating to the Korean people and landscape, it proved a boon for the Maryknoll Sisters’ popularity and influence, as they became the vanguard among civilian religious relief agencies. The Sisters were in many ways outsiders among the high Protestant leadership that still made up a majority of Christian organizations in relief agency conversations. Yet, they had an outsized influence in the Korean relief landscape, with the ears (and the hearts) of military personnel of all ranks in Pusan. They received patronage from international medical missions, high-ranking military officials, interfaith organizations, the Korean government, and a slew of organizations and civilians at home in the U.S. At the same time that Maryknoll Sisters fashioned

27 “1,000 Patients a Day” *The Catholic Advance* (Wichita, KS), February 1, 1952.

themselves as humble servants of God (and perhaps because of that fashioning), they built a reputation for being competent, brave, and endlessly giving.29

Figure 8: "1000 Patients a Day" USIS Photograph, reprinted in The Catholic Advance (Wichita, KS) February 1, 1952.

29 Sr. Maria del Rey, Her Name is Mercy (1957); Photo Insert, Daily Independent Journal (San Rafael, CA), August 13, 1955; “Newporter Sees Maryknoll Sisters at Work in Korea” Newport Daily News (Newport, RI), November 21, 1953.
Having hardly started work in Spring 1950 before evacuating after the North Korean invasion, the Sisters worked hard to launch in March 1951, returning to their compound in Pusan on March 19, 1951—the Monday of Holy Week. They now returned more energized than ever to work—like Christ welcomed back to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Arriving during the holiest days in the Catholic calendar, the Maryknoll Sisters’ return and service read like a reenactment of Jesus Christ’s sacrifices, which in the Catholic faith enabled the salvation of all mankind. When Sister Maria del Rey published her stories about the Pusan Mission in *Her Name is Mercy* in 1957, she did not phrase this parallel so boldly, but it is an abundantly clear metaphor in her writing.

The first Maryknoll team at Pusan consisted of highly qualified professional women. They built an emergency relief institution based in deep faith and high qualifications in medical expertise and Korean language. Sister Mary Mercy Hirsboeck, the first woman from her order to go to medical school, was the mission head. Working under her were Rose of Lima (pharmacist) and Augusta (nurse) who arrived on that first plane from Japan. Sisters Rose and Augusta had both been in Pusan in 1950 and were evacuated to Japan when the war broke out in June. Arriving in the weeks following Hirschboeck were Sister André (who had spent time in Korea before 1951); Sister Therese (M.D.); Sister Alberta Marie, a young Sister with an East Asian Languages

degree from Yale; and Sister Herman Joseph, a lab tech, who had been in Korea before World War II arrived in the weeks following Hirschboeck. Thus the Sisters built their reputation and their partnership with the American military on solid the ground of professional knowledge and experience.32

Some of the Sisters’ appeal stemmed from a simple lack of resources in Pusan—at the time the mission restarted, few other civilian relief agencies operated in Korea. Thus Maria del Rey described these women reopening the Clinic in March 1951 as a “pioneering venture.”33 This was not strictly accurate: Protestant missionaries had been operating in Korea since the 1880s, and some Catholic ventures attempted to establish missions earlier. The first Catholic efforts in the 1700s fared poorly: Chung-Shin Park argues that Korea was a highly xenophobic country with its Confucian tradition firmly entrenched, and that the Confucian ruling class perceived Catholicism to be a threat to its political power and cracked down on religious dissent, shutting the door on Christian evangelism for a century.34 The Sisters’ gathering in Pusan, however, was emblematic of their missionary experience. Moreover, the women were in the unique domain of


34 Protestant efforts and had greater success, with Christian institutions and converts growing substantially after the 1890s. Park, “Protestantism in Late Confucian Korea: Its Growth and Historical Meaning,” The Journal of Korean Studies 8 (1992), 140-144.
civilian medical relief, which paved a wide path for partnerships with military personnel eager to get the ball rolling on relief projects.

Despite the Sisters’ experience and expertise, they were unprepared for the degree to which the war had overwhelmed Pusan. Sister Rose of Lima, Sister André, and Sister Augusta had worked in the Maryknoll Sisters’ house in Shingishu in what is now North Korea before World War II. Sister Mary Mercy Hirschboeck had worked in the north before the Pacific War as well. Rose of Lima, André, and Augusta had been setting up the clinic in Pusan when they were evacuated at the start of the war in June 1950. They were aware of conditions in Pusan before the war—that the city had a good deal of poverty left over from Japanese occupation and the Korean dispossession it caused. When the sisters arrived in Pusan in March 1951, they were at once intimately aware of the history and culture of Korea, and utterly surprised and unfamiliar with the conditions they found in Pusan.35

The war had put incredible pressure on Pusan and on the Maryknoll compound. The nine months that the Maryknoll Sisters were away from Korea, Korean clergy who had staffed and supported their clinic had tried to carry on medical work. Supplies,

35 Timeline, Folder 1: Histories—Maryknoll Sisters, Box 1, Series 1: Korea, Korea History 1932-2007, Maryknoll Sisters Archives, Maryknoll Mission Archives, Maryknoll, NY; Sister Maria del Rey, Her Name is Mercy (1957), 10.
however, were scarce for everyone—and even more so for Koreans. The property that the Sisters had started setting up in April 1950 had become shelter to many. By March 1951, there were twenty Carmelite Sisters occupying one of the structures at the compound, and Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help and twenty “French Fathers” sharing the other primary living quarters. The French Fathers vacated so that the Maryknoll Sisters could have a place to stay on their own property upon their return to Pusan. Other buildings around the compound not designed as living quarters now served as shelters for some fifty-odd people. With schools around Pusan converted to hospitals, the garden at the Maryknoll compound was a quiet and private enough spot that teachers brought their students there for lessons—eight school classes congregated in that garden. Everywhere in Pusan was overcrowded and short on supplies. Maryknoll Sisters would have to make due as others had.

For its part, Pusan was a city undergoing dramatic change, with myriad hurdles to administering aid, as well as opportunities for forging partnerships. As the only stronghold that remained under South Korean control during the Korean People’s

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36 Simply put, American relief missions had funding available to them (through UNKRA, individual donors, Church World Service and the like), and Korean organizations did not. In his report on conditions in South Korea for the AFSC in 1952, Dale Nebel noted the same phenomenon: “Indigenous Korean voluntary agencies and individuals are to be commended for their selfless efforts in a heartbreaking situation with little by way of resources.” Nebel, “Report on Southern Korea” December 30, 1952, 1, Korea Reports (General), Country-Jordan to Country-Korea 1952, Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

37 Maria del Rey, Her Name is Mercy (1957), 20-22.
Army’s invasion in the summer of 1950, UN forces established Pusan as a base of operations.\textsuperscript{38} The presence of tens of thousands of troops gave the city the aura of a safe place to go, especially important with so much of the surrounding country in shambles. But Pusan was not equipped to house so many of Korea’s refugees and so many of the world’s troops. The population of Pusan doubled from 1949 to 1950, growing from roughly half a million to a million people.\textsuperscript{39} There were not nearly enough houses to shelter all the people coming to the city, and makeshift hut cities cropped up in the surrounding hills, themselves causing public health issues, without reliable clean water or public sanitation. One mobile Army surgical hospital doctor described Pusan as “a nightmare of refugees, ragged children, and kids pimping.”\textsuperscript{40}

Though unprepared for the gravity of the damage the last year had done to Pusan, the Sisters thrived in this environment. They established their clinic in their overcrowded compound in the overcrowded city, and immediately began expanding. Through day-to-day clinic functions the Sisters administered emergency relief and more regular care to patients. They set up a system whereby Korean civilians waited in long lines like the one Elizabeth Reid described in the opening vignette to receive vaccines,

\textsuperscript{38} Paul Thomas Chamberlin, \textit{The Cold War’s Killing Fields}, 128-29.

\textsuperscript{39} Tai Hwan Kwon, Hae Young Lee, Yushik Chang, Eui-Young Yu, \textit{The Population of Korea} (The Population and Development Studies Center, Seoul National University, 1975), 67.

\textsuperscript{40} Bruce Cumings, \textit{The Korean War}, 74.
antibiotics, and often a set of fresh clothes. Sisters reported that the number of visitors to the clinic grew every day, although it could only accommodate outpatient treatment. To welcome the constant growth in number of patients and people who sought treatment for chronic conditions, the Sisters instituted their own administrative system to manage the long lines. In addition to the hundreds of patients at the clinic, Sisters also made house calls to villages populated by refugees in the hills surrounding the city, providing some relief amidst the city’s chronic overcrowding and instability.\footnote{41 “Maryknoll Sisters in Korea” 
Mission Forum (1984), quoted in Religious Orders in Korea (Waegan: Benedictine Press, 1991), Folder 1, Box 1, Korea History, Maryknoll Sisters Archives, Maryknoll, NY.}

In order to manage their always-growing load, the Sisters constantly expanded their clinic. In 1951 Sister Rose of Lima got the pharmacy running, and it doubled as a supply depot for the donated goods Americans sent the mission. Under Sister Dolorosa’s direction, the compound’s expanded Children’s Clinic (nicknamed “Blue Heaven”) opened in November 1951. The clinic quickly outgrew that space, and moved into a newly constructed two-story building in summer of 1953.\footnote{42 Sister Maria Del Rey, Her Name is Mercy, 96.} The Sisters also opened their small house for the care of infants that year, as well as an orthopedics lab for putting children in casts in 1952. Many orthopedic cases the clinic treated were not
from fractures or sprains, but bone tuberculosis, as T.B. spread in the weakened and crowded population. 43

Cooperation with the American military was vital to day-to-day operations of the clinic, as well as to its expansion. Army Nurse Frances Register started volunteering for the Clinic in April 1951—immediately after the Sisters arrived. After a chance meeting while she was searching for fresh flowers for Easter decorations, Register took to the Sisters and their work. She became a regular volunteer, spending her off hours helping the Sisters minister to sick Koreans out in the countryside.44

Register’s experiences with the Sisters are telling of the dynamic between the order and the military. Frances Register proved instrumental in tending to members of a community who lived in caves and tiny makeshift straw huts in the hills outside Pusan, a community the Sisters dubbed Mat Shed Hill. In early April 1951 the area saw a large outbreak of smallpox. Among other tasks, the Army nurse crawled into locals’ sheds (not large enough to stand up in) and tended to the severely sick. When one of her fellow Army nurses, Anastacia, asked Register how she could stand to be around such conditions and urged her consider her own safety, Register replied, “What nurse wouldn’t hesitate to get into that mess out there on the hill? And if I were in it alone I

43 Ibid., 113. The lab was housed in an Army tent, and staffed by volunteers from hospital ships set up in the port.
44 Ibid., 31; 129
would never climb up there, never help those horrible cases, never dare to get so close to
lice and rats and flies. But ‘Stacia, the Sisters are doing it. This may sound crazy to you—
so long I am with God’s servants, I am sure no harm will come to me.’

Register’s admiration for the Maryknoll Sisters speaks to the mission’s capacity
to cooperate with other institutions (most notably the military) and hints at their
superior commitment. Register’s work was not and could not be expected of her as an
Army nurse, but the Maryknoll Sisters did it daily, and empowered others to do it. The
Sisters certainly did not frame themselves as better or more capable than others because
of the volume and intensity of their work—rather, the messaging was that they carried
out God’s work, and therefore God empowered and protected them.

This was not the only instance in which Maria del Rey implied that the
Maryknoll Sisters had a moral standing above their collaborators. In another story also
about Mat Shed Hill, the Sisters disabused Korean children of the profane English
phrases they learned hanging around American GI encampments. The children
reformed their language, she reported, and went on to become helpers and informants
to the Sisters.

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45 Ibid., 31. It seems Sister Maria del Rey reconstructed this scene from an interview with Register after the
fact. This wording, then, is a story choice. In press coverage, however, observers spoke of the Sisters in
much the same way. One clipping described a large group of UN military personnel, moved by the work at
the clinic, giving up their pay to contribute to the Sisters. “The Master Sergeant Gives Month’s Salary to
Nuns” The Catholic Advance (Wichita, KS), November 9, 1951.

46 Ibid. 32
Register was just one of many military personnel who volunteered their time with the Clinic. For people of faith, and for people who worried about the fate of Koreans, the Clinic provided a space for service. But Register also implied that the Maryknoll Sisters were willing to go further and take more risks to take care of Koreans than the military was. Register’s story thus gestures to notion of separate, cooperative spheres between the military and religious voluntary agencies, where American military (and government) did the work of warfare and later, development, and religious missions did the work of relief and care.47

The Maryknoll Sisters built themselves a reputation of cooperating with the military and government to do important work. They also built themselves a reputation of being exceedingly resourceful. In May 1951, Sister Agnes Therese wrote to her mother that the Sisters had requested a store of DDT from the Army in order to dust their patients and their bedding to eliminate bug infestations. She speculated that “because these conditions are such a danger to UN personnel, we will probably be able to get it.”48 The implication was that the Sisters created easier and safer work conditions for those in

47 These separate spheres of hard and soft power were hardly new: in her work on the British Empire during the Seven Years’ War, Erica Charters demonstrates how religious missions in the eighteenth century tended to vulnerable populations to manage public health during wartime, a means of bolstering the administrative and warmaking responsibilities of the imperial state. Charters, Disease, War, and the Imperial State: The Welfare of the British Armed Forces during the Seven Years’ War (University of Chicago Press, 2014).

48 Sister Maria Del Rey, Her Name is Mercy, 44.
positions to exercise what might be considered “harder” power, and were recognized for their contribution.

The mission’s relationship with the military grew through expanding engagement among personnel. The mission diary in April 1951 reported that interest had grown in the Sisters’ work, no doubt due in part to people like Register, who told her colleagues about her volunteer work at the clinic.

“Many Army and Navy Doctors and nurses and other hospital personnel are taking an interest in our work. They give us help as well as supplies and we have received some exceptionally fine gifts of medicine—penicillin, streptomycin, etc. Today we were given an offer of blood for transfusion any time we need it. Outdated blood cannot be used by the Army, though technically it would be safe to use for another week or two. We received [and gave] blood that was just outdated and never had an unfavorable reaction.”

The Army was not going to use that expired blood, but the Sisters, who had not observed adverse reactions, would not let it go to waste.

49 Ibid., 36.

50 This use of expired blood speaks not to a lack of medical expertise, but to the Sisters’ scrappy ethos. It also speaks to ongoing debates in humanitarian ethics regarding the use of substandard goods in charitable or emergency situations. Considering ethical guidelines regarding donations of expired or near-expired drugs, a 2008 essay for the WHO Bulletin astutely summarized the problem: “This practice is defended by a sad assertion that making use of expired, partially degraded drugs is better than having none at all. It obviously raises an ethical issue about the existence of first-hand/first-class drugs and second-hand/lower-class drugs.
The Sisters’ cooperation with the military included formal and informal cooperation with military personnel at all ranks, not simply relying on random generosity from soldiers or army nurses. High ranking American military personnel personally expressed their admiration and need for the Sisters’ work. Furthermore, the Army relied on the Sisters for tasks around Pusan where they had closer connections or better access than the military. In one instance, an American Military Police Officer asked Sister André to help him get two dead bodies moved from a public space. The Korean men had been found by the docks, and the M.P. had not been able to get anyone to remove them. Sister André called around to her contacts and was able to get the National Police on the case. Where communication had apparently broken down between two state agents the Sister prevailed in mobilizing a Korean government official by working her contacts.51 Owing to their language ability and service, the Maryknoll Sisters had the capacity to intervene and get things done in Pusan, a

and a disturbing division between the rights and worth of different populations.” The Sisters may not have viewed the problem in this way, accepting the blood as called for in their vow of poverty and because not much else was available. Nonetheless they telegraphed to donors that their Korean patients could make do with substandard medical supplies. Cristina P. Pinheiro, “Drug Donations: What Lies Beneath” Bulletin of the World Health Organization 86, no. 8 (August 2008).

51 Sister Maria Del Rey, Her Name is Mercy, 125.
reality that the American military stationed there recognized and acted on, leaning on the Sisters for help dealing with the locals.

The American military in Pusan also expressed its faith in the Maryknoll Sisters through large-scale, systemic support which lasted long after MacArthur’s departure (and indeed after the détente). Brigadier General Richard S. Whitecomb, Commander of the Pusan Military base, took an interest in the Sisters’ work after one day delivering a lost and abandoned child to the clinic. He found Myong Sukie, malnourished and badly afflicted with impetigo, playing in the streets. He scooped her into his car and dropped her off at the clinic. Thereafter he took to popping by to see how things were going at the compound whenever he had a chance.52 After the détente in July 1953, Whitecomb lent his troops, whose idleness worried him, to the Sisters. Fourteen servicemen built cement walks, an incinerator, fireproof roofs, and a cement driveway at the compound.53 Whitecomb thus took an interest in the clinic in an informal capacity, which eventually led to supporting the Sisters’ endeavors in a formal capacity—demonstrating the multiple layers of commitment and investment the military held in the mission.

The clinic benefited even more when Armed Forces Assistance to Korea (AFAK) started operating in 1953. American engineer-led teams built infrastructure all around Pusan. Most notably, with cooperation from the United Nations Korean Reconstruction

52 Sister Maria Del Rey, Her Name is Mercy, 174-175.

53 Sister Maria Del Rey, Her Name is Mercy, 176.
Agency, the American Army, the Korean government and Army, and the Pusan municipal authorities, AFAK in 1954 constructed a wide paved highway, colloquially known as “Maryknoll Road” because it ran directly in front of the clinic. Governmental relief programs bolstered the mission’s capacity to work, and also the mission’s prominence in Pusan by labeling the road after the Sisters.

Whitecomb’s greatest contribution to the Maryknoll Sisters’ Mission, however, was his grand hospital plan, for which he mobilized GIs voluntary spirit and public-private cooperation. On Labor Day weekend 1954, the city of Pusan hosted a carnival which saw in attendance more than 43,000 GIs—mostly American—over three days. Servicemen and their guests withstood the early September heat to play carnival games like “Dunk the M.P.,” and to see Brigadier General Whitecomb dressed in “complete Korean costume.” The carnival raised $70,000 toward Whitecomb’s hospital building scheme. In 1954, Pusan had only 40 hospital beds available to the general public.

Whitecomb sought to build seven new hospitals with a total capacity of 570 beds. The


55 Maria del Rey, Her Name Is Mercy (1957), 179

56 That is, the number of beds for inpatient care of civilians was 40. There were hospitals equipped to tend to the military, which could admit civilians on a case-by-case basis: Sister Alberta Marie Hanley, for example, received treatment and died in the Army’s 21st Evacuation Hospital. “Report of the Death of an American Citizen: Alberta Elizabeth Hanley,” American Foreign Service, January 31, 1952, ancestry.com—sourced from the National Archives and Records Administration.
U.S. Army would oversee hospital construction and provide materials. The Korean government would provide the land. And voluntary agencies would pay for the labor and equip the new buildings to make them suitable as hospitals. Whitecomb helped to offset those costs for voluntary agencies by fundraising within his ranks, asking soldiers to contribute one percent of their salary to the agencies, which included, in addition to the Maryknoll Sisters, Seventh Day Adventist, Baptist, and Australian Presbyterian Missions. Among themselves the voluntary agencies elected to hand over the lion’s share of the funds raised, forty-four percent, to the Maryknoll Sisters’ Clinic. With American military, Korean government, and civilian support, the Maryknoll Sisters broke ground on their hospital in July 1954.

With the hospital project underway and the fighting halted, the Sisters maintained momentum in medical programs in the second part of the 1950s. In 1956, the Sisters started their second Korean clinic in Jeung Pyung, in the rural, mountainous region of central South Korea. Throughout the 1950s the Sisters also initiated other projects, though none as prestigious as their clinic and hospital. They started a Hansen’s Disease (leprosy) program, and social services and leadership education. In 1960, Sister Maria del Rey, *Her Name Is Mercy* (1957), 179.

Gabriella Mulherin started a credit union aimed mainly at supporting and pooling funds for women, the first in East Asia.\(^5^9\) After the movement of refugees slowed down in the late 1950s, the Sisters turned their focus somewhat from medical relief to education.\(^6^0\)

Nonetheless, the hospital still stands in Pusan. The hospital, and all the projects the Sisters built once they established that base, would not have been possible without both individual and systematic support from the American armed forces. The success of the Pusan mission hinged on the Sisters’ relationship-building with the American military apparatus, just as the long-term infrastructure the Sisters built emerged directly from the emergency circumstances of the Korean War.

Though the work at the clinic was grueling and the conditions in Pusan were dire, the Sisters told their story in a cheery manner: scrappy souls engaged in baptizing babies, saving lives, and soliciting donations. But the Sisters also faced near-constant death in their work, conditions made harder by the sacrifices fundamental to being a woman religious. Maryknoll Sisters’ faith offers an explanation of why they devoted

\(^{59}\) Mulherin’s credit union movement aimed to create financial resources for Korean women; by encouraging financial responsibility, and building a banking system where women involved could control their own accounts and learn about saving, borrowing, and spending. “Korea History” Folder 1: Histories—Maryknoll Sisters, Box 1, Series 1: Korea, Korea History 1932-2007, Maryknoll Sisters Archives, Maryknoll Mission Archives, Maryknoll, NY

\(^{60}\) “Korea History” Folder 1: Histories—Maryknoll Sisters, Box 1, Series 1: Korea, Korea History 1932-2007, Maryknoll Sisters Archives, Maryknoll Mission Archives, Maryknoll, NY
themselves despite the danger and heartbreak. Beyond feeling the tug of patriotism or feeling for destitute Koreans, the Sisters explained their contributions through faith.

Conditions in Korea were dangerous not only for Koreans, but also for the Sisters themselves. Sister Alberta Maria Hanley died at twenty-six due to complications from working in the Clinic. Hanley was young and from a prominent Detroit family. She received a degree from Yale in Far Eastern Languages before her assignment in Korea. She died of thrombocytopenic purpura secondary to toxic hepatitis, a diagnosis that likely would not have been fatal had Hanley not been in Korea.\(^\text{61}\) Not merely a tragic loss, Hanley’s death offers insight to the ways faith animated and motivated the Sisters’ work.\(^\text{62}\)

On January 24, 1952, Sisters Rose of Lima and Mary Mercy found Hanley in the clinic’s community room, covered in hemorrhages on her arms, legs, neck, and body. Hanley bled from her nose, throat, and gums as well. Hirschboeck and Sister Agnes Therese (also an M.D.) immediately suspected thrombocytopenia (low platelet count),

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\(^\text{61}\) Thrombocytopenic purpura is usually survivable for adults in good hospital conditions. Indeed, Hanley may not have gotten the blood sickness if she had not traveled to Korea: her Foreign Service death report did not specify what caused the hepatitis—it could have been exposure to chemicals or bacteria through her relief work at the clinic. “Report of the Death of an American Citizen: Alberta Elizabeth Hanley,” American Foreign Service, January 31, 1952, ancestry.com — sourced from the National Archives and Records Administration.

which Sister Herman Joseph confirmed with a blood test. The Sisters took Hanely to the Army’s 21st Evacuation Hospital. Many of the hospital staff, including nurse Frances Register and Hanley’s physician, Dr. Barbaro, worked at the Maryknoll Clinic in their off hours, so the Sisters were familiar with the workers that took care of Hanley, just as many of the people from the hospital were familiar with the Sisters. As such, the Army medical workers gave Hanley special care. Barbaro secured her a private room. He gave her VIP treatment, and told her she had a “VIP illness:’ he joked that Hanley she could write home and brag about her exotic disease. But the specialized care was not enough. Hanley died in the hospital with Sister Mary Mercy at her side on January 31, 1952.

The Sisters found in Hanley a heroine and a moral in the glory of dying for service to God. The Sisters drew on the terrible nature of Hanley’s death. They did this to a degree they did not and could not for Korean civilians. As much as the Sisters drew on imagery of Korean suffering, that suffering remained very abstract, in a way that precluded sustained grief for Koreans. The tragedy of her passing was underscored by its drama: Hanley died of a disease middleclass white adults were relatively unlikely to contract in the United States. Her sacrifice in going to Korea made a martyr of Hanley.

63 Bessie Casey, “Marquette’s Medical Missionaries” The Linacre Quarterly 33 no. 3 (August 1966); Maria del Rey, Her Name is Mercy (1957), 118-119.

64 Ibid., 119.

Indeed, in Hanley’s final hours she spoke with Sister Mary Mercy Hirschboeck about returning to God. Hanley seemed to rejoice in being called home, and she and Hirschboeck compared her death to Christ’s: the thrombocytopenia caused Hanley to bleed from her eyes, which Hirschboeck likened to Jesus bleeding from his crown of thorns at the crucifixion.66

Sister Hanley received a place of honor in the Sisters’ stories and in Pusan. The funeral was well-attended and somber, a significant event for Americans and Koreans, civilians and military personnel throughout Pusan. Guests from the American Embassy were in attendance, as well as local chaplains. “Eight stalwart young servicemen” served as pallbearers. Because the Maryknoll Sisters were embedded deeply in the social life of Pusan, Hanley’s funeral was a major event in the city.67

In the ways they narrated her life and death, the Maryknoll Sisters positioned Hanley as a martyr who died nobly.68 In keeping with the Sisters’ belief that death constituted a joyous return to God, Maria del Rey did not describe Hanley’s death or funeral as a tragedy, despite her young age. She was going home. Thus Hanley’s death both raises and answers the question of why the Sisters did this dangerous, dirty work.

66 Maria del Rey, Her Name is Mercy (1957), 121.
67 Maria del Rey, Her Name is Mercy (1957), 122-23.
The Sisters lived in horrendous conditions and put themselves at risk. But Hanley, on her deathbed, expressed joy at being able to sacrifice and die to serve God. The Maryknoll Sisters’ faith and the community the order promised offered an exciting and spiritually fulfilling life—and death, if it came to that. The Maryknoll Sisters filtered all of their work, their personal lives, and their tragedies through the narrative of service to God.

Catholic clerical life, with all its apparent restrictions, offered a measure of freedom and autonomy to middle class American women not readily found elsewhere—even in missionary life. In the wake of World War II, the Maryknoll Sisters found themselves with unprecedented opportunities. Women interested in travelling the world, being active members of their faith communities, and even having prestigious professional careers could turn to the Maryknoll Sisters for fulfillment. The order gave women religious chances for education, adventure, and public life relatively free of stigma for seeking out any of those things. In general, the Maryknoll Sisters were not ostracized for their lack of romantic partnership or marriage; taking the cloth provided insulation from such imputation. Sister Mary Lois Breen, who joined the Pusan mission in 1956, reported that her position as a woman religious made medical school easier. As one of only four women in her class of ninety-eight students at Marquette, Breen

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69 Sister Maria del Rey, *Her Name is Mercy* (1957), 121.
admitted that her male classmates were easiest on her because “she was treated more as a religious figure than a woman.” And with the Church’s postwar growth, and the greater status of Catholics in America since the New Deal and World War II, the Sisters did not feel the sting of anti-Catholic sentiment as strongly as previous generations had.

Of course there were trade-offs, sacrifices Sisters made for the spiritual and professional fulfilment the cloth provided. Life with the Maryknoll Sisters had the structure and strictures of all Catholic religious communities. Sisters took vows of poverty and celibacy, and during training, silence. Novices, most of whom were in their early twenties when they joined the order, were barred from many of the basic social pleasures of American life—dating, obviously, but also forming close friendships, or going to parties or dances. But once the Sisters fully entered the order their lives were

70 Breen left the Maryknoll Sisters in the 70s. She kept up her medical practice and got married. For Breen the Sisters were a means to live out her religious devotion and access the kind of life she wanted, practicing medicine and travelling the globe. Her vows were not, however, permanent. Though leaving the Sisters was a somewhat controversial choice (Vatican II allowed for women religious to leave religious orders and remain in good standing in the church, a move not allowed before 1962), it speaks to the kind of access the Maryknoll Sisters provided that couldn’t be found elsewhere. Moreover, the fact that Breen left and married a man played into the normative gender position the Maryknoll Sisters sought to display in the 1950s: their Sisters could be perfectly capable of traditional family life if they chose. Louis Breen Franks, M.D., Obituary, Post-Star (Glen Falls, NY), December 20, 2020.

open to a world of travel, professional and spiritual fulfillment, education, and, of course, sisterhood.\textsuperscript{72}

The acceptance and freedom the Maryknoll Sisters experienced, however, was partly a product of careful marketing. Though the Sisters were exempt from some American standards of respectability and success, the order was careful to frame their members and their work so as not to disrupt the gender order they viewed as God-given. The Sisters did not marry or have children, but they spoke of their service in maternal terms: they were like parents to literal and figurative children of the world, taking on responsibilities for rearing, educating, and healing the poor, wounded, and orphaned. The Sisters were likewise quick to highlight that entering the order was not a backup plan for women who could not fit into a traditional family structure, perhaps implicitly disassociating themselves from lesbians. Thus in publicity materials, newspaper and magazine articles, and Maryknoll publications, the Sisters frequently highlighted how physically attractive their novices were. These were not ladies who could not land a husband and thus retreated to a community of women. They were pretty, lively, middle-class, well-educated girls who were called to serve God and chose a life of abstinence and service. As many of the articles underlined, the Sisters were just

\textsuperscript{72} Izzo, \textit{Liberal Christianity and Women’s Global Activism}, 132
like any other American women. They were cute and fun and craved adventure. They just happened to be women religious.\footnote{Ibid., 130. By way of example, Izzo tells the story of Sister Bernadette Lynch, who was featured in \textit{Cosmopolitan} in 1955. The photo essay, titled “Bernie Becomes a Nun,” highlighted how attractive and well adjusted Lynch was—she had friends and boyfriends and went to parties, and then became a Maryknoll Sister. Reflecting on this story, Lynch noted that people were surprised when she entered the order, and that later people were surprised at how normal she was, given that she was a woman religious.}

The Maryknoll Sisters, in addition to playing up their normative gender and celibate sexuality, also framed their role as symbolic mothers. In a 1952 report to the National Catholic Women’s Council, one Sister relayed a story that a little boy who visited the clinic to thank the Maryknoll Sisters for taking care of his little sister. The boy brought the Sisters apples and told them that his little sister now had two grandmothers: one at home, and the Sister who had cared for her.\footnote{“Specific Cases,” January 17, 1952, Folder 27: Sisters’ Stories, Box 3, Sub-Series 10: Pusan, Series 3: South Korea, Korea History 1932-2007, Maryknoll Sisters Archives, Maryknoll Mission Archives, Maryknoll, NY.} Fashioning themselves as caretakers, especially for Korean children, the Sisters put forth a nurturing role, wittingly or unwittingly—and in so doing fashioned themselves as maternal agents of the American state.\footnote{Sylvia van Kirk developed Foucault’s notion of “dense transfer points” in the North American colonial context to show how “tender ties” constituted a vital mechanism of colonial power transfer: intimate human contact made sites of the production of power and hierarchy. In Korea the Maryknoll Sisters’ “tender ties” played out through, most obviously, medical practice, where the Sisters entered Koreans’ homes and had very intimate bodily (and spiritual) contact of the sort neither the Korean state nor the military nor UN authority was likely to experience. Through these tender ties the Sisters transmitted both their Catholic doctrine, and messages about American benevolence. See Sylvia Van Kirk, \textit{Many Tender Ties: Women in the Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870} (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983); Michel Foucault, \textit{The History of Sexuality}, vol. 1: \textit{An Introduction} trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1980); Ann Laura Stoler, “Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies,” \textit{The Journal of American History} 88 no. 3 (December 2001).}
The Maryknoll Sisters mobilized their doctrine and the Sisters’ sacrifice and maternal grace to solicit support from people outside their organization to equip and fund their projects. People who supported the clinic, from sailors stationed near Pusan to New England housewives, spoke of the Sisters’ humility, competence, and bravery. The Sisters positioned their work as vital, drawing on imagery of suffering and deserving Koreans. In response, the clinic’s boosters found purpose in backing the women religious.

The Maryknoll Sisters built an expansive network of supporters, stemming from the military contacts with whom they worked so closely. Navy Nurse Mignon Johnson volunteered at the clinic, and thought the U.S. held untapped potential for helping the Sisters’ efforts. Off duty military nurses came to the clinic to help with whatever the Sisters needed, from giving injections to painting makeshift furniture made from repurposed wooden crates. To Johnson’s mind, the more people the Maryknoll Sisters helped, the more patients would come to them seeking help. The sisters worked to constantly improve their clinic and serve more patients, but the more they built the more patients streamed in. As Johnson put it, “Folks at home will want to cash in spiritually… on this operation. They can get supplies for us. I’ll start with my own friends and relatives.” And that she did. Johnson wrote to all her contacts in Chicago of the vast and growing number of Koreans the Sisters reached, of the sacrifices the sisters made—she
claimed they’d all lost weight but had maintained dedication and cheery dispositions.

Johnson asked her friends for help at the same time that she assured them that the mission was worthy and blessed: “I have been with the sisters long enough to know that God is looking after them. Every time the cupboard is bare, some help comes.

Nonetheless, I’m writing to you all to make sure that it keeps coming.”

People like Johnson mobilized their first-hand experience with the Sisters to spread the news of the clinic’s work and to garner support for it from friends and neighbors, creating widespread networks encouraging individual and collective contributions.

The head and founder of the clinic herself, Sr. Mary Mercy Hirschboeck, also solicited help from allies at home, making appeals through spiritual language and friendly connection. In Spring 1951 she wrote her brother, John, who was the Dean of Marquette’s Medical College, to request that he ask around for medications. The National Catholic Welfare Council had sent vitamins and antibiotics, but already the clinic ran short. The sisters addressed difficult cases of whooping cough, tetanus, tuberculosis, smallpox, typhus, and typhoid, and not enough medications for it all. Sr. Agnes Therese had a habit of ministering to the displaced people on Mat Shed Hill, and their huts did not engender healthy conditions: communicable diseases flourished in the crowded conditions, and they had little shelter or clean water. On May 12, Hirschboeck

76 Maria del Rey, *Her Name is Mercy* (1957), 49

77 See Chapter Two for more detail on homefront efforts to collect goods for Korea.
wrote to her brother again, this time thanking him and God that medicines had arrived. NCWC had sent 9,000 doses of tetanus shots; 2,500 vials of pertussis vaccine; and 5,000 capsules of chloromycetin, an antibiotic to treat serious bacterial infections. According to Hirschboeck, Sr. Agnes Therese couldn’t wait for the medicines to be unpacked: she filled a bag and ran up to the hills to minister to her regular patients as soon as the shipment was opened.78

These personal appeals reveal important facets about how garnering support for the clinic worked. First, they required a personal investment. That personal investment was vital to the appeal: Johnson could demonstrate how important the cause was by mentioning that she herself committed to it, spending her time off volunteering at the clinic. Second, such appeals utilized personal and professional contacts, banking on trust in existing relationships. Hirschboeck could urge her own brother to ask around for antibiotics. Appeals for support came with ample thanks and with the reminder that more help would always be put to good use. Sisters and boosters could then continually work their contacts with messages that highlighted their own competence, Koreans’ need, and that donations would go to serve long-term, grand stakes. They had to demonstrate how awful conditions in Pusan were, but also make a case for the Maryknoll Sisters’ capacity to turn things around. The Sisters needed to appear properly

78 Sister Maria del Rey, Her Name is Mercy (1957), 46-47.
humble, and exceedingly competent—and they drew on their positioning as disciplined, qualified and pious Sisters to do so.

Observers of the Maryknoll Clinic mobilized around Pusan appealed to this network. In one instance, an article in *West Coast Sailors* (published by the Sailors’ Union of the Pacific) in winter of 1952 marshaled resources from American and international seamen. Charlie Goldsmith wrote that his ship’s captain took an interest in the Sisters and urged his subordinates to do the same. The *SS New Zealand Victory* had a store of cereal infested with weevils, and some thirty pounds had been condemned. A representative of the National Seamen’s Association heard the captain order the steward to dump the cereal overboard and objected, saying they could instead take it to the Maryknoll Sisters’ clinic. Despite the grain’s imperfections, the NSA man was sure that the Sisters would take it, and spend all night picking out every single weevil if necessary. The captain helped deliver the cereal to the clinic and was shocked at the dire conditions there: “Outside, waiting their turn, stood young mothers in their twenties looking like they were sixty. I saw children and babies, consumptive children, children suffering from every imaginable disease, all of which are caused by starvation.”

Highlighting the most vulnerable victims of the war, babies, children, and mothers, the captain connected their plight with a problem the sailors could help with simply by providing food. The captain went on, imploring his subordinates to make donations. “Now, I’m not a Catholic, and I don’t believe many of us on this ship are. But church
affiliation doesn’t matter. The Maryknoll Sisters don’t ask the poor, the sick, and the starving whether they are Buddhist, Catholic or Protestant. They just open up their hearts and treat them all alike. And boys, they do it with a smile.”

The Captain’s framing moved the sailors: The men of the SS New Zealand Victory took up donations and collected $200 and five big boxes and a laundry bag full of clothing. In his article, Goldsmith suggested that every ship arriving in Pusan take up clothing and money donations. Thus support for the Maryknoll Sisters spread beyond Pusan, and to people not directly affiliated with their medical work. Importantly, observers positioned the Sisters’ work as thorough, hands-on, and always, always resourceful and competent. The Sisters, furthermore, made themselves easy to support by accepting any goods they could get. Like the expired blood and the bug-infested grains, the Sisters took goods that others would or could not use, putting their vow of poverty to good use.

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79 Ibid., 103-105.

80 The use of these goods is also, perhaps, telling of the level of care they expected to give Koreans. It may have seemed to Americans that to a people so destitute, any goods—even those deemed unfit for American bodies—were good enough. Budgets for Korean projects versus state-side ones are telling: the tuberculosis program in Korea cost about $15,000 per year to run, and its budget included non-medical support for patients’ families. Meanwhile the Sisters set a fundraising goal of $1,000,000 for their tuberculosis treatment center in Southern California. Goods did not cost the same in Korea and California, but many of the medical supplies and some food in Korea was difficult to obtain and quite costly. It is more likely that the standard of living that Americans expected for Koreans was much lower than what they expected in the U.S., than that real costs for programs were so drastically different. Maryknoll Sisters Pusan, Korea, Folder 19: Maryknoll Sisters Clinic - Histories, Box 3, Subseries 10: Pusan, Series 3: South Korea, Korea History 1932-2007, Maryknoll Sisters Archives, Maryknoll Mission Archives, Maryknoll, NY. “Ground will be broken for $1,000,000 Sanatorium” Los Angeles Times, March 23, 1958;
In one instance, word-of-mouth stories about the Sisters’ good works resulted in a local campaign that stretched seven thousand miles to Pusan. Captain Daniel Carlson of the U.S. Navy witnessed the Sisters’ work firsthand when stationed in Pusan in 1953. Moved by the need he perceived and by the Sisters’ dedication, Carlson wrote to his chapter of the Knights of Columbus back home in Newport, Rhode Island asking for donations. His colleagues initiated the “Carlson Campaign,” collecting “clothing, medicine, soap, and other articles for the needy in Korea.”81 Another local, Frederick Patykewich, pitched in to the campaign, reporting to the Newport Daily News of conditions in Pusan. Patykewich, who had worked on a commercial ship that docked in the port city, reiterated Carlson’s message that the people of Pusan were in dire need. He further added he had witnessed the “nuns” at the clinic handing out goods “only to deserving patients.”82 The goods shipped from Newport in early December 1953. Civic groups collected “177 barrels of clothing, soap, and medicine.”83 The Navy shipped the goods on destroyers bound for Pusan, and delivered them to Carlson, who in turn made them a gift to the Sisters.84 The Carlson Campaign illustrates how information about the Sisters, and about Pusan and Korea, moved from people on the ground to people home.

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81 “Carlson Campaign for Korea Seen Well in Progress,” Newport Daily News (Newport, RI), November 7, 1953.


83 Photo Insert, Newport Daily News, December 8, 1953.

84 Photo Insert, Newport Daily News, December 8, 1953.
in the U.S. Carlson made his community care about Pusan by telling them a story of tragedy and of people trying to fix the problem. And the people of Newport took up the cause with enthusiasm. With the help of military infrastructure in the shape of shipping from the Navy, Newport, Rhode Islanders made what felt like a vital contribution to healing Koreans.

Figure 9: Sister Augusta gives mother and baby powdered milk delivered by Carlson Campaign. U.S. Navy Photograph, reprinted in The Catholic Advance (Wichita, KS), February 19, 1954.
Stories about the Maryknoll Sisters’ work had the capacity to produce momentum at home and cooperation for the raising of funds and goods. After reading an article in the New York Times about the Maryknoll Sisters’ work in Pusan, Lillian Shapiro, a Jewish New Yorker working in advertising, took a special interest in the Sisters. Moved by stories of the Sisters’ selfless good works for those in dire need, Shapiro informally gathered money and medical goods for the mission from her friends and professional contacts. 85 She flexed her advertising acumen to solicit donations in money and goods from her community and her professional network. Shapiro started a chain mail campaign, where she wrote letters to ten friends, imploring them to send funds and send letters to ten of their own friends, and so on. She headed a lollipop drive, where she asked candy companies to donate and her friends to purchase sweets to ship overseas. 86 Next came a vitamin drive: Shapiro personally visited pharmaceutical companies and frequently left their buildings with a carton of vitamins in hand. 87

In perhaps her most influential master stroke, Shapiro started “Operation Adoption” in 1952. The basic premise of the program was to offer support for Korean families with children who needed long-term care. Sister Mercy figured that if parents did not have to worry about making money to support their healthy family members,

85 Sister Maria del Rey, Her Name is Mercy (1957),135.
86 Ibid., 136.
87 Ibid.
they could afford to travel the clinic frequently to access the long-term care their
chronically sick or injured children needed. Shapiro agreed, and set about raising funds.
The opening campaign raised enough money for one family’s necessities for a year.88

As the West Coast Sailor story soliciting donations and Lilian Shapiro’s show, the
Maryknoll Sisters crafted a reputation appealing to people outside of their own religious
circles. The Sisters grounded their work in Catholic clerical ideologies of poverty,
sacrifice, and celibacy. Far from alienating potential non-Catholic donors, the Sisters’
positioning made them appealing ambassadors of American aid in Korea.

Interfaith appeal aside, the Sisters’ greatest support came from Catholic
institutions. The National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW) took up the family
adoption program in Summer of 1952. The Los Angeles Times reported that, under the
guidance of Mrs. J. Selby Spurek of the War Relief Committee, the NCCW set up a
system whereby donors could contribute five dollars, which would make a robust
package of food to be assembled at the Maryknoll compound in Pusan. Spurek also
included a report on the dire conditions in Pusan, noting widespread malnutrition and
tuberculosis among Korean children.89 The pamphlet that the NCCW distributed
regarding the adoption program, in this case referred to as “the Madonna Plan,” drove

88 Ibid., 135-138; On symbolic and actual adoption of Asians by Americans, see Christina Klein, “Family Ties
as Political Obligation: Oscar Hammerstein II, South Pacific, and the Discourse of Adoption” in Cold War

home a similar message. It added that the cost of basic goods in Korea was exorbitant, while there was little work for men to find. The NCCW reasoned that with Korean men unable to provide for their families, it was up to Catholic Women and the Maryknoll Sisters to act as motherly caretakers for sick Korean children. From Lilian Shapiro corralling her friends to the NCCW crafting a systematic national campaign, the Maryknoll Sisters and their activities held wide appeal for Americans responsive to stories of suffering.

These tales of interested parties taking up the raising of funds and goods for the Maryknoll Clinic were implicated in widespread efforts to make Americans care about Koreans in the 1950s. Relief efforts had the capacity to grow: the military enabled the Maryknoll mission, and civilians threw their support behind the Sisters, largely because of the Sisters’ narrative of having few resources. This, in turn, enabled the military to minimize its institutional financial contributions because of the extent of individual contributions. However noble the Sisters’ intentions were, they also had the effect of easing war-making for the American military.

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90 The Sisters often kept children at the center of their publicity. Noting that Korean children’s fathers could not work further drove home a message of deservingness—these were people who could not fend for themselves, and Korea lacked the resources to support stable traditional family structures which would ideally fend for helpless children. I address a similar phenomenon in the AFSC’s milk program in Kunsan. Pamphlet, Folder 28: Adopt-a-family Program/ Madonna Plan, Box 3, Sub-series 10: Pusan, Series 3: South Korea, Korea History 1932-2007, Maryknoll Sisters Archives, Maryknoll Mission Archives, Maryknoll, NY

91 Julia Irwin writes on the tensions of humanitarian aid: “Rather than acting as an antithesis to conflict... humanitarian aid arguably helped to validate war by softening its horrors.” This dynamic was clear in the
As public attention strayed from Korea in the late 1950s, the Sisters put their good reputations to work to re-capture Americans’ attention—and funds. When Her Name is Mercy, Maria del Rey’s glowing biography of Mary Mercy Hirschboeck, arrived on bookshelves in fall of 1957 it brought a modest uptick in publicity for the Maryknoll Sisters. John Cogley, Executive for Fund for the Republic and columnist for the Catholic publication Commonweal, reviewed Her Name is Mercy in the New York Times in November. The review praised the Sisters broadly and Hirschboeck specifically. Aside from a summary of events in Pusan, Cogley offered little by way of assessing the book, though he thought it would bring Hirschboeck new fame—implying that it would and should be widely read, and that it cast her in an appropriately flattering light.92

Cogley’s review was mostly summary, but more importantly, he spun a narrative of American global intervention in which the sisters were a vanguard. America, according to Cogley, was “staunchly isolationist” at the time that Hirschboeck joined the order, but the Sisters were “ahead of the rest of us.” Cogley went on to celebrate the death of American isolationism at the hands of evangelizing globetrotters like the Maryknoll Sisters:

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“Nowadays American service men may find themselves at the most remote corners of the globe. In many cases it has happened that the Maryknoll nuns are already well established when these service men arrive. And wherever the peaceful army of Maryknoll has been, the troops discover, Americans are thought of the way all of us, from John Foster Dulles down the line, would like foreign peoples to think of Americans.”

What was ostensibly meant to be a review of Her Name is Mercy was an opportunity for Cogley to wax poetic about the good that American missionaries and troops did abroad (and in Korea especially), and trumpet the Catholic influence that encouraged American interventionism. Of Hirschboeck, Cogley wrote, “She happens to be a nun, religiously motivated, but I think the most hard-shelled atheist in the land would be proud a woman like her was, willy-nilly, representing Americans abroad.”

Cogley argued that Christian missionaries, religious motivations of fighting godless communists aside, were perhaps the best representation of American beneficence around the globe.

Cogley, a Catholic journalist, may have been biased in his analysis of the book’s and Hirschboeck’s importance, but the biography received acclaim from other

\(^93\) Ibid.

\(^94\) Ibid.
quarters as well. *Her Name is Mercy* appeared on “A List of 250 Outstanding Books of the Year” of 1957 in the *New York Times* the following month.\(^95\) Moreover, The *New York Times* rated *Her Name is Mercy* was one of the top nine books on religion published in 1957.

Howard Rusk, Chairman of the American-Korean Foundation, used this momentum to seek more funds for relief projects. Rusk praised Cogley’s review and reminded readers that the Sisters still needed assistance: “Funds are still needed to complete [the] hospital and carry on this important mission of both medicine and human compassion.”\(^96\) Rusk told of his own experience visiting the clinic in 1953, and noted that the American Korean Foundation was raising goods and funds for the Sisters. He asked readers for more.

In 1958 the Maryknoll Sisters in Korea and those working at the Maryknoll Sanatorium in Monrovia, California collaborated on a project to bring Korean orphans to Southern California. In Spring the Sisters orchestrated the transport of eight “babies” (their ages were not stated, but based on pictures from the article they appeared to range from infants to toddlers) to the sanatorium where they were housed in their own bungalow on the compound’s grounds. The sisters arranged for the eight children to be


adopted by local families. Though not infected with tuberculosis, each of these children had been exposed to it and was suffering from malnutrition. The children awaited clearance from the California Board of Health before they could be relocated to their adoptive homes.⁹⁷

The adopting out of these eight children was a boon for Maryknoll Sisters in both Korea and Southern California. The Sisters’ Pusan Clinic already had a sterling reputation, with the publication of Her Name is Mercy the previous year, and the television documentary “M.D. International,” which featured the Sisters’ work in Pusan, airing earlier in 1958.⁹⁸ The Korean babies coming to California served as a reminder of the Sisters’ important and lasting work in Korea, even now, nearly five years after the end of the war. The project showcased the Sisters’ ability to reach across the Pacific to transform the lives of families living in Southern California.⁹⁹

At the same time, the Monrovia Sanatorium where the children stayed was undergoing renovations. The Sisters were in the midst of fundraising one million dollars to transform the compound into Southern California’s most prominent tuberculosis

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⁹⁹ In the wake of the Korean War the international adoption industry between Korea and the United States boomed. For more on this see Arissa Oh, To Save the Children of Korea: The Cold War Origins of International Adoption (California: Stanford University Press, 2015); Susie Woo, Framed by War.
treatment center.\textsuperscript{100} For that purpose, the Korean orphans were excellent free publicity. Reporting for the \textit{Los Angeles Times}, staff writer Mary Ann Callan described the Korean children as transforming the mood at the sanatorium. The babies themselves were lively and babbling: Sister Mary Mark told Callan that they were quickly picking up English. The children injected a welcome change in routine for the staff (twenty-five Maryknoll Sisters, eighteen nurses, and a rotation of volunteer doctors), who were accustomed to treating mostly grievously ill, poor adults. By contrast, the Korean children were lively and cute.\textsuperscript{101} The Korean children’s presence at the Sanatorium drew attention to the compound’s work at a vital time. The following month the Sisters held a benefit dinner to raise $350,000 for equipment for the new hospital.\textsuperscript{102}

The housing of the Korean Children at the Monrovia Sanatorium demonstrates cooperation between domestic and foreign missions, and the ability by the Sisters to leverage it to broaden their basis of support for various projects. The anecdote also demonstrates the lasting positive public relations assistance the Pusan mission offered the Sisters—the Sisters were able to carry out complex projects like orchestrating international adoptions half a decade after the war ended. What is more, they were able


\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
to sustain the positive image of their Korean mission and use that positive image to expand missions elsewhere.

The Maryknoll Hospital in Pusan, which Brigadier General Whitecomb helped to fund in 1954, still stands. Pusan, for its part, is now a colorful ocean-side city, the second largest municipality in South Korea. The military history of the city is well-known. The Sisters’ impact, less so. Their mission offers key insights into the shape of U.S. war-making in the early Cold War. First, the Sisters’ cooperation with the military shows us how armed forces-civilian partnerships in war relief worked. Through efforts that spanned from personal voluntary contributions to large-scale infrastructure building, the Sisters and the American military worked hand-in-hand and used each other’s resources for their own ends. The clinic and its contributors also demonstrate the dynamics of the relationship. The Sisters intentionally pulled outsiders into their orbit, soliciting help from friends near and far. Those efforts shaped and were shaped by American impressions of Korea: The Sisters told a carefully-crafted story that highlighted their own competence, the country’s devastation, and Koreans’ deservingness. Americans who contributed to the Maryknoll clinic contributed to the war effort as they helped the Sisters relieve the military of the need to provide relief. Humanitarian efforts relied on a triangulation between military, church, and civilian enterprises.
In turn, military partnerships gave civilian organizations credibility and expanded humanitarian opportunities. As the episode of the Korean babies brought to the sanatorium in Southern California illustrates, work done in Korea could serve to expand work elsewhere. The Maryknoll Sisters exploited their military contacts, their community ties, and their positive reputations in Pusan to build elsewhere. The Sisters thus demonstrate the entrepreneurial potential of relief projects.

Finally, the story of the Maryknoll Sisters Clinic underlines how central religion was to war relief in Korea. The Sisters relied on the Catholic church as an institution to provide structure and funding to their projects. Even beyond that kind of logistical support, however, faith underpinned the Sisters’ endeavors. It was their Catholic faith, and the specific theology of their order that provided strength in their everyday lives and order to the particularities of their efforts. Though the Maryknoll Sisters were a dramatic example, Christian duty was a key component to Americans’ conceptualizations of fighting communism. As we will explore in the next chapter, faith facilitated not only cooperation with U.S., anticommunist global intervention, but also questioning of that policy.

On the anniversary of its first year of work in South Korea, the Friends Service Unit in Kunsan celebrated all that it had accomplished to help the war-torn country. Hosting a “Night to Welcome Mr. Schneider and Celebrate Friend Service Unit Anniversary,” in October 1954, the workers at the mission enjoyed tea, entertainment, and the exchange of gifts. In the past year the Quaker mission had made considerable repairs on the local hospital, conducted widespread surveys to provide basic welfare to the displaced population in the southwestern port city, implemented a highly-regarded nurse training program, and distributed thousands of servings of milk to children and pregnant women.¹

Louis Schneider, honoree of the night, was in awe of it all. The Saigon-based American Quaker was in Korea to assess and report on AFSC activities there. Despite his concerns over the politics on the ground in South Korea, especially pertaining to President Syngman Rhee’s militarist policies, Schneider was impressed with the Kunsan mission’s accomplishments. This celebration, he said, embodied the caring and world-building potential of the “Friendly approach.”²

¹ “Report on Korea from Louis W. Schneider” November 11, 1954, Korea Administration Publicity, Country-Korea (Coms. & Orgs.—K.A.V.A.), Foreign Service, AFSC Archive, Philadelphia, PA.

To close out the evening, one of the women from the nurse training program read a Korean parable. The story told of an exiled King who came upon a rural village seeking food and shelter. The villagers recognized the King, but had no food to offer him. There was a chestnut tree in the village, but its chestnuts were green. The villagers kept going outside to check if the nuts had ripened, but the King went to sleep hungry. In the morning, the villagers found that the chestnuts had ripened overnight so they had food to serve the King. “Korea’s chestnuts are green now,” the story concluded, “Not tomorrow or even the next year, but possibly in ten or twenty years when you return on a visit to Korea you will find that Korea has ripe chestnuts to offer.” Schneider found this a timely tale. If Korea were to produce comfort and peace for Koreans, it would take a good deal of tending to the trees: “The tragedy of South Korea today is that many, many people who hold this noble sentiment are struggling to achieve their aspirations in a self-defeating situation. Unless the climate changes, Korea’s chestnuts may never ripen.”

Schneider and his fellow AFSC members had raised objections to right-wing politics in South Korea since the start of the war. The Friends were especially wary of Syngman Rhee, whom they recognized as corrupt and unpopular among Koreans.

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3 Ibid., 7.

Rhee raised further concerns about free political expression when in 1952 through threats and coercion he forced an amendment to the South Korean constitution allowing him to hold a presidential election that bypassed the National Assembly to ensure his reelection.\(^5\) By 1954, the Friends' antipathy for the South Korean President grew as his policies obstructed their long-term aid goals: the Friends' work in the Kunsan Provincial Hospital, for one example, had been hindered by one of the Korean doctors being drafted to serve in the Korean Army. Rhee pumped resources into building the fourth largest army in the world (which Schneider described as “incredible”), and into building flashy institutions like hospitals and hotels which sat in disuse for lack of resources and lack of Koreans able to afford their services.\(^6\) In these frustrating political conditions, the Friends feared their relief and development projects could not take hold. Moreover, they feared that the work they did facilitated American imperialism and Korean right-wing authoritarianism, and thus hindered long-term peace and comfort for Koreans.

The parable of the chestnuts and Schneider’s concerns over whether the Friends Service Unit could produce long-term results in Korea encapsulate the Quaker experience with humanitarian aid in Korea. Animated by a deep concern over the ravaged country and a firm belief in helping produce long-term solutions to address poverty and war, but stymied by the political situation on the ground, the Friends in


South Korea embarked on an eight-year mission that shaped the organization’s understanding of their own duties and capabilities, and of the United States’ place in the Cold War world.

This chapter examines the responses of the American Friends Service Committee to the Korean War. “A Small but Good Job” traces how AFSC policy toward Korea developed from the start of the war in June 1950 to the dissolution of the Kunsan Friends Service Unit by early 1958. As the chapter shows, the AFSC (and American Quakers in general) started from a position of great ambivalence about any involvement in Korea—their own or the United States’. By the end of 1950, however, the Service Committee was working on the logistics of a medical mission to Korea, which came to fruition in 1953. By 1958 AFSC members’ ambivalence resurfaced and they withdrew from Kunsan, citing their discomfort with the South Korean government and the American military as the reason.7

“A Small but Good Job” traces the shifts in AFSC policy and cooperation with American voluntary aid networks over the course of the 1950s. AFSC leadership formed a surprisingly strong criticism of American action in Korea—at times openly identifying American modes of engagement in Korea as “empire.” AFSC actions, however, did not always operate in tandem with this critique. Rather, the Committee tended to act to

advance its prominence in aid circles and ability to carry out aid work, even when that meant cooperation with the very institutions its members found objectionable: the American and South Korean governments, and United Nations-backed militaries. Thus this chapter shows that AFSC desire to aid Korea sparked in the organization initial compliance with American empire in Korea and a then a principled departure from the occupied country.

The AFSC shows us the possibilities of dissent from American policy. The AFSC was in the 1950s continually welcomed into the fold in aid circles—circles that included high-ranking federal officials and military commanders as well as other church organizations. This despite the fact that AFSC leaders were at times openly critical of those institutions’ policies and actions in respect to Korea. The AFSC’s case lays bare a lack of consensus on Korea or aid there even among demographically similar Americans—middle class white Protestants. But it also shows that the illusion of some consensus—the notion that all religious groups shared general anticommunist, service-oriented goals and would play ball with government institutions to achieve those—was itself a powerful force. This allowed the AFSC entry into aid conversations even while its members were openly skeptical and even disapproving of fellow aid organizations' and the government’s strategies.

Furthermore, this chapter stands in contrast to the preceding one. As “Catgut in God’s Hands” showed, the Maryknoll Sisters worked with American military and
governmental institutions, their aims and politics operating, largely, in tandem. The order’s compliance with American imperial aims and anticommunist politics furnished the Sisters with the prestige, access, and resources that allowed the Maryknoll Sisters to carry on their mission in South Korea years after armistice. By contrast, the Quakers in Korea were ambivalent about working with American and Korean governmental and military institutions, and at times directly clashed with American foreign policy aims in Korea. Despite this, the Friends Service Unit mission in Kunsan looked quite similar to the Maryknoll mission in Pusan. Like the Sisters, Friends stood on both their humanitarian competence and their faith. They set about caring for Koreans with much the same methods as the Sisters, valuing emergency care and education, and crafting long-term institutions to provide health and welfare for Koreans. The Quakers even had similarly amiable relations with the local military occupation: Servicemen near Kunsan helped with upkeep of the FSU mission in much the same way those in Pusan had. But the Quakers viewed their relationship to Korean and American institutions in different and more critical terms. Eventually the Quakers reached the limit of their willingness to comply with the American imperial apparatus in Korea.

This chapter thus shows the gravitational pull of American empire for those involved in warzone aid. An organization like the AFSC that was critical of U.S. imperialism could maintain its critique, but on the ground circumstances shaped the
Quakers’ mission to look very similar to the missions of those who enthusiastically supported the American imperial project in Korea. Seeing this, they left.

American Friends Service Committee action in Korea was a product of its moral commitments, its history, and its ongoing search to establish its place as a humanitarian and activist organization. Established in 1917 to set up service projects for conscientious objectors as an alternative to military service in World War I, the American Friends Service Committee was modeled after the British Friends Service Council which partook of similar activities in the U.K. and collaborated with the AFSC internationally. People need not have been Quakers to participate in AFSC projects, but leadership of the Committee was comprised of members of the Religious Society of Friends. AFSC members did not purport to speak for the Religious Society of Friends, but because that church had (and still has) little official clergy or leadership structure, in conversations about Korean aid, the AFSC became the de facto voice of American Quakers.8

By June 1950, the AFSC participated in a slew of domestic and foreign service projects, all trained on the organization’s central peace-making mission. These ranged from fights for racial justice at home to a joint mission with Canadian and British Friends in China. The AFSC and the British Friends Service Council won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947—an international acknowledgement not only of the Friends’ recent

peace activism, but also of 300 years of Quaker “efforts to heal rifts and oppose war.”

AFSC policy in 1950 skewed liberal. American Friends were highly supportive of the United Nations and believed in global benevolent development schemes to lift war-torn and newly decolonized regions out of poverty. Because the Religious Society of Friends was a peace church, Friends prioritized stopping all violence and setting up institutions—including aid projects—that would prevent the need for future armed conflict.

In 1950 the AFSC was right in the middle of a process of professionalization and “de-Quakerization,” to limit the influence of the church and seek a position as a secular international NGO. However, in the documents I examined in my research, AFSC members explained their understandings of service and peace through Quaker doctrine. Furthermore, most of the AFSC in Korea were Quakers. As such, I follow the lead of my actors and refer to AFSC personnel in the U.S., and AFSC aid workers abroad as either “AFSC members” or “Friends.”

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10 Obviously there were some limits to this support—one of the Shanghai Friends spoke sharply against Point Four. Multilateralism was an important component of Quaker support for development activities it provided nonviolent redress to poverty and recovery from colonialism. Friends chafed at displays aid displays they deemed overly partisan.

The organization’s activist commitments informed its actions at the start of the war. The Friends had little experience in Korea, but having won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947, the organization positioned itself as an important player in world events.\footnote{Ingle, “The American Friends Service Committee 1947-1949” (1998), 27.} When the Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950, they jumped to confused attention as quickly as anyone else in the U.S. Though the AFSC had no official contacts in Korea and no history there, they were naturally concerned. Simply by virtue of being Americans at a tense moment, AFSC leadership wondered about the global implications of the war and of the U.S.’s military involvement. But the war also immediately spoke to the Quakers on a moral level. As pacifists, AFSC members were apprehensive that the U.S. was getting into a war, when Quakers opposed all war. As liberal internationalists, AFSC members expressed serious concerns over the UN’s authority because it seemed that the U.S. had sprung to action in Korea and then \textit{ex post facto} received UN authorization. Friends were highly skeptical of the “police action” as it looked like UN supported American imperial moves.\footnote{Lewis Hoskins (AFSC Executive Secretary) Letter to Friends, October 10, 1950, Country-Korea, Country—Japan (Personnel-E. Sharpless) to Country—Norway 1950, Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA.}

With peace and the authority of the United Nations at stake, the AFSC set about a mission of fact-finding and opinion-forming in summer 1950. Members examined the war, Korean politics, and the relief projects Americans had in the works. Early meetings
raised dismay among AFSC leadership. They found that even among other organizations concerned with emergency relief, attitudes about the war were overly casual, not nearly alarmed enough at the potential for destruction. AFSC China Desk head Spencer Coxe met with a number of British and American church leaders who had worked in Korea. The men he met with, who represented prominent mainline American and British missions, thought the war would be over quickly, and with minimal human toll. With this Coxe adamantly disagreed: he suspected the war would not be decisive or quick, finding that they failed to take Soviet, Chinese, or North Korean military power seriously enough. Moreover, Coxe was shocked by the glib attitude his colleagues displayed toward the destruction the war would yield. Not believing the war would end quickly, Coxe worried about the human cost. Being a Quaker, he looked with alarm on any violence. This early meeting portended widespread feeling among AFSC personnel that few Americans fully appreciated the calamity that was the Korean War.

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14, Coxe got his professional start with the China desk for a the AFSC—before that he’d been in college at Yale and then at a conscientious objector forestry camp during World War II. He worked for the Friends Ambulance Unit in China 46-49; then AFSC work in Austria until 1952, when he went left for the ACLU. “American Civil Liberties Union Marks Passing of a Former Greater Philadelphia Chapter Executive Director Spencer L. Coxe,” ACLU, July 12, 2011. https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/american-civil-liberties-union-marks-passing-former-greater-philadelphia-chapter

Further fact-funding yielded more grave assessments from experts on Korea. In July Coxe met with Youngjeung Kim, a Korean expatriate and President of the Korean Affairs Institute. Kim compared attitudes and conditions in South Korea to Nationalist China in 1949: wide dissatisfaction and lack of support for the rightwing government. Kim was also keen to refute a misrepresentation of North Korea. The figures about refugees fleeing south, he claimed, were likely heavily skewed, more likely 800 thousand than 3 million. And many of those who fled the North, according to Kim, did so because they were Japanese collaborators or landlords. Kim’s empathy North Korea may have been rare in 1950, but he also expressed a critique of Syngman Rhee and his right-wing government that was well-known to Korea experts in 1950, if somewhat buried in a narrative that sought solidarity between the U.S. and South Korea. Kim’s appraisal was important to the AFSC: Friends—much more than most of the aid organizations with which they cooperated—really struggled with what it meant to support and cooperate with the South Korean state. Throughout the 1950s the AFSC conveyed discomfort with the intense economic disparities and political repression

16 Accounting in March 1951, the UN estimated three million Koreans were in search of shelter. Sarh Conway-Lanz, “Beyond No Gun Ri,” Diplomatic History 29 no. 1 (January 2005): 70-71.

visible in South Korea, even in the following years when the AFSC would cooperate
with that government to work on relief projects.

Coxe also found and reported to the AFSC that among Koreans the politics of the
two Koreas had considerably more nuance than the “North Korea invades South Korea”
narrative so common in the U.S. Coxe gleaned that Korea experts—and most Koreans—
genernally rejected the 38th parallel as a meaningful or permanent border. Again and
again Quakers and others would note that the 38th parallel was a wartime tool used in
liberating Korea from Japanese rule; it was never meant to engender long-term
occupations or permanent partition. Soviet and American militaries agreed on the 38th
parallel as a division between territories where their respective armies would accept
Japanese surrender. But after that surrender neither army left.18 In the eyes of many
Koreans and some Americans experts, the Korean was home to one nation. This, too,
informed Friends’ approaches to work in Korea. In the coming months, they mapped
out strategies to do relief work in the entirety of Korea, not only the South, a plan also
guided by Quaker principles of serving all sides in a conflict.19

18 On the creation of the two Koreas, see Bruce Cumings’ two volumes, The Origins of the Korean War, I:
Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947 (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981); The
1990).

19 Regarding the humanitarian principle of neutrality and its limits, see Julia Irwin, “Raging Rivers and
Propaganda Weevils” Diplomatic History (2016).
B.Y. Choy, Former Deputy Director of Public information in the South Korean Interim Government, and in 1950, Visiting Professor of Political Science at Seattle Pacific College, met with Coxe and shared further considerations about the political and ideological stakes of considering Korea as one whole. Choy tied the unnatural division of Korea to wider problems of colonialism—Japanese colonialism in the past, and Soviet and American colonialism in 1950. If foreign powers would just leave Korea alone, Choy argued, Koreans could unite under an autonomous political formation. This understanding cut to the core of the AFSC’s problem in Korea, and would haunt the group’s leaders for the duration of their work there. As much as its workers tried not to be agents of American policy, they grappled continuously with whether their own work hindered the potential for an independent, unified Korea, and to what degree they had to or should comply with institutions that kept Korea separated and tied to foreign influence.

As Coxe raised questions about whether their work could potentially lead to the expansion of American imperialism, Friends from within the organization’s ranks answered a resounding “yes.” In mid-July 1950 Spencer Coxe and Mark Shaw (also of

20 For more on South Korea’s particular brand of anticolonialism, see Gregg A. Brazinsky, Nation Building in South Korea: Koreans, Americans, and the Making of a Democracy (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

the AFSC China desk) wrote to the Shanghai Friends Service Unit asking workers
stationed there for their thoughts on what, if anything, the AFSC should do or say in
respect to Korea. Several Shanghai FSU friends wrote Coxe in August in response. The
Shanghai FSU opted to have individual members send responses if so moved rather
than issuing a consolidated statement. Those Shanghai Friends who responded declared
in no uncertain terms that the United States and the AFSC should keep their hands off
Korea. 22

The Shanghai Friends objected to UN overstepping and American militarism.
From their perspective, American intervention in Korea was ill-advised, and it seemed
as though the U.S. military was dictating to the United Nations. Furthermore, they
thought the AFSC should refrain from statement-making in regards to Korea, so as to
maintain a nonpartisan stance. Any statement the AFSC issued, Shanghai Friends
believed would abet American Korea policy, policy which seemed to the Quakers to be
morally and politically dubious. 23

22 Elizabeth File to Spencer Coxe, August 10, 1950, Folder: International memos, 1951, Box: 1951, Country —
Korea (Individuals) to Displaced Persons Services (Coms. & Orgs. – Standing Conf. of Vol. Agencies Coop.
with IRP), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA; Bert K. to
Spencer Coxe and Mark Shaw, “Korea,” August 10, 1950, Folder: International Memos, 1951, Box: 1951,
Country — Korea (Individuals) to Displaced Persons Services (Coms. & Orgs. – Standing Conf. of Vol.
Agencies Coop. with IRP), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia,
PA.

23 Elizabeth File to Spencer Coxe, August 10, 1950, Folder: International memos, 1951, Box: 1951, Country —
Korea (Individuals) to Displaced Persons Services (Coms. & Orgs. – Standing Conf. of Vol. Agencies Coop.
with IRP), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA; Bert K. to
Spencer Coxe and Mark Shaw, “Korea,” August 10, 1950, Folder: International Memos, 1951, Box: 1951,
The Shanghai Friends who wrote to Coxe and Shaw expressed somewhat more radical views than were common among Quakers within the United States. Informed by their experience in China, and on the other side of the revolution, Shanghai FSU personnel espoused a good deal of empathy for communist politics. Canadian Friend Jack Gerson, for example, lamented the AFSC’s proposed statements on Korea. He complained that the AFSC was getting involved in issues beyond its purview, and without fully understanding the nuanced political landscape. Having seen the damage of China’s civil war, missionaries like Gerson warned that the United States had chosen the wrong side, and had acted without understanding in backing the Chinese Nationalists.24 Gerson openly stated that Communism was a better political system for the colonized and recently decolonized people of East Asia than an “American Way of Life” predicated on “foreign domination, foreign favouritism, and foreign arrogance.”25 This stood in contrast to most expressed Quaker opinions at the time. Friends tended to

Country—Korea (Individuals) to Displaced Persons Services (Coms. & Orgs. – Standing Conf. of Vol. Agencies Coop. with IRP), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

24 AFSC staff remained supportive of Communist China, or at least of cooling tensions between the U.S. and China. They lobbied for UN recognition in the 50s, and authored “A New China Policy” in the 60s, seeking repaired relations between the U.S. and the People’s Republic of China. “China—History,” afsc.org. For more on American missionaries’ support for Communist China, see Karen Garner, Precious Fire: Maud Russell and the Chinese Revolution (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003).

express some understanding and sympathy for East Asian countries that moved toward communism, but they believed that communism was not a tenable or just system. Most Quakers sought a capitalist-friendly alternative which provided for the dispossessed. Gerson, on the other hand, found American capitalist development plans on the lines of Point Four to be deadly and economically exploitive.26

Gerson’s counsel notwithstanding, during the years of the FSU mission, AFSC activities looked very much like those of their peer institutions. And yet they sought advice from experts considerably to the left, and considerably more critical of American and South Korean policy. The urgency of the devastation in Korea would ultimately outweigh concerns about imperialism. And indeed this became the answer to addressing these questions over the Friends’ proper place and proper actions: they must serve those they can, in whatever way they can.

From these conversations in the weeks following the war’s start, the AFSC began to form a stance on Korea. First and foremost, they called for the war to end immediately. Second, in Korea and throughout Asia the UN should spearhead efforts to provide war relief, education, job opportunities, and access to medical care. These efforts should function as part of a commitment to true self-determination for all nations.

Friends reasoned that improved conditions would prevent poor and colonized peoples from turning to communism or violent conflict. AFSC members thought these moves, furthermore, might salvage the United Nations’ and the U.S.’s reputations in Asia. Friends worried about what the Korean War did to American and UN global public relations. The Committee found that the affair seemed too imperial, with the UN a tool of the U.S. The AFSC thought that the war cast the U.S. in such a bad light that other countries might turn toward communism rather than cooperation with the United States.27

This stance, however, would remain mostly internal. The AFSC at times publicized aspects of their critique of American policy in Korea, but on the whole shied away from commentary. By staying away from making public statements or drawing a party line on Korea, AFSC leadership space to develop in depth, informed opinions on Korea that could evolve. The AFSC was not tied to a particular publicly shared policy. And indeed though their criticisms of U.S. intervention in Korea remained, the officials at times set them aside in the service of highlighting the importance of their work and not the complexity of its context. Also, by refraining from bold public statements, the AFSC was continually invited to work with the very military and government institutions its members criticized.

Having researched the situation in Korea, and discussed what their relationship to the war should be, in the fall of 1950, AFSC stances on Korea were put to the test for the first time. By that time its officials had frequent conversations with other Christian aid organizations, as well as with United Nations officials. In November 1950, Colonel Alfred G. Katzin of Unified Command met with AFSC officials and communicated a desire to staff five civilian relief teams, each consisting of one doctor, one sanitary engineer, and one social worker. Unified Command asked the Red Cross to staff four teams, and the AFSC to staff one. This caused a problem for the AFSC. Members were happy for the opportunity to get into Korea to do medical and emergency work, but after meeting with Katzin, leadership did not feel assured that their personnel could operate with appropriate autonomy, especially given that they would be imbedded with the military in a war zone. Furthermore, the AFSC raised a number of concerns about carrying out relief work under Unified Command. The existing relief teams were integrated into military command. This was not tenable given the Quakers’ allegiance to pacifism, and their desire to be kept apprised of their agents’ movements abroad.

Furthermore, the United Nations paid the salaries for Unified Command aid personnel.

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28 This staffing request was in addition to the five teams that Unified Command requested from the UN in September 1950. UN specialized agencies staffed the first five teams. AFSC Memo to Lewis Hoskins, Julia Branson, and Lou Schneider, “The Possibilities of Quaker Relief in Korea (Memorandum #2)” November 9, 1950, Folder: Country: Korea Internal Office Memos 1950, Box: Country—Japan (Personnel—E. Sharpless) to Country—Norway), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

29 AFSC leadership speculated that if Friends reported directly to Unified Command, they would not be able to adequately report to and take guidance from the AFSC.
While the AFSC was not comfortable with this on the grounds that they wished for true autonomy for their Friends abroad, the Committee itself could not be sure it could sustain workers' salaries in Korea. The AFSC did not feel comfortable taking UN money for Friends' salaries, but they could not afford to pay the salaries themselves. Finally, Unified Command required aid workers to take an oath of loyalty, a policy that would obligate Friends to violate Quaker theology’s prohibition on oaths. With Katzin’s request, AFSC members’ concerns about compliance with empire moved from the realm of abstraction to that of concrete logistical hurdles. They could not afford their own Korea project, yet they could not abide the system set up by Unified Command.

But the Unified Command request raised another issue: how to serve people on both sides of the Korean War. In Fall 1950 AFSC leadership toyed with the prospect of a Quaker mission to Manchuria. This mission, they speculated, could provide care to Chinese people and North Koreans affected by the war. Furthermore, the AFSC in 1950 already had a mission to China in operation, so the sense was that they could build from

30 Julia Branson to Area Directors, Memorandum, “Korea—Director’s Meeting,” November 10, 1950. Folder: Country: Korea Internal Office Memos 1951, Box: 1951, Country—Korea (Individuals) to Displaced Persons Services (Coms. & Orgs. – Standing Conf. of Vol. Agencies Coop. with IRP), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA. Friends do not swear oaths as a matter of theology. This doctrine stems from Quaker interpretations of a passage from the Gospel of Matthew admonishing worshipers not to swear, but to answer simply and truly “yes” or “no”. Matt. 5:34-47, (NKJV). The AFSC’s discomfort with the UN’s request for an oath of loyalty gestures to the organization’s continued adherence to Quaker doctrine, whatever their secular service aspirations.
their existing infrastructure and networks there.\textsuperscript{31} AFSC officials decided that they should not work with Unified Command at least until they could figure out a plan for Manchuria. Philadelphia and London Friends told Katzin that they would like to wait until they could investigate the possibility of a Manchuria mission before making a commitment to a project in South Korea, which put the prospect of working with Unified Command indefinitely on hold. Katzin graciously accepted the AFSC’s response and implied that UNC would ask for their assistance in the future.\textsuperscript{32}

Despite the AFSC’s open intention to aid both sides, not at all unprecedented in humanitarian relief, but not in practice in Korea, United Nations Command still sought to work with the Friends. Despite growing government anxiety over the possibility of political dissent, the AFSC’s capacity to provide a needed service seemingly outweighed worries over their ideological objections to American policy. Theology may have provided helpful here: the Quakers’ Christian understanding of pacifism was a religious

\textsuperscript{31} In this planning, AFSC officials also toyed with the idea of letting the Shanghai office work as the other side of the conflict from South Korea. AFSC documents stopped raising this problem during the Kunsan mission years. By that time the Chinese Communist Party had expelled the Shanghai Friends Service Unit, along with most American Christian missions, from China.

worldview, not a political stance. Therefore it was not a threat to American leadership in Korea at least at this point.

The Unified Command team never materialized, nor did the Manchuria mission. Many aid projects were in limbo from 1951 until 1953. With the stalemate delaying the war’s end, Unified Command maintained a tight grasp on aid work.

The AFSC therefore turned to home front efforts like collecting relief goods. Even those posed hurdles as goods were routed through military channels and some Quakers objected to not having control over how they were distributed. Many American Quakers, as conscientious objectors, took to homefront activities that supported civic engagement and targeted relief efforts in Korea without bolstering the military. C.O. fundraising deposited roughly $1.4 million in the U.S. Treasury through impounding objectors’ earnings. AFSC Executive Secretary Lewis Hoskins and Raymond Wilson of the Friends Committee on National Legislation worked with the U.S. Advisory Committee on Foreign Aid in the Department of State to get the money earmarked to

33 There were obvious limits to this understanding. It held only as long as the AFSC was willing to cooperate with American policy. And of course, as the history of conscientious objection shows us, the United States did not, generally speaking, extend this kind of leeway to people who were not white and not Protestant. During the Vietnam War this unequal allowance of objections was particularly stark: Black men were denied C.O. status at egregious rates. See Timothy Stewart-Winter, “Not a Soldier, Not a Slacker: Conscientious Objectors and Male Citizenship in the United States during the Second World War” Gender & History 19 no. 3 (November 2007); Kimberley L. Phillips, “War! What is it Good For?: Black Freedom Struggles and the U.S. Military from World War II to Iraq. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012): 213-215.

34 The Maryknoll Sisters Mission was an obvious exception here. MacArthur himself approved their presence, and their close cooperation with the military speaks to Unified Command’s habit of privileging cooperation with organizations most apt to respect the chain of command.
contribute to relief funds for “mutilated children in Korea.” As they waited to embark on a mission on the ground in Korea, the AFSC mobilized small and large-scale efforts to contribute to relief work in whatever way they could while trying with mixed success to avoid contributing to the war.

Though the war still carried on and relief workers struggled to get efforts off the ground, by the second half of 1952, AFSC personnel were in negotiations with United Nations liaisons, the FSC (British Friends), and other American churches about setting up a long-term project in Korea. They could finally turn from domestic relief efforts to more intensive, intimate ones in Korea. In late 1952 Helen Wilson of UNKRA offered American churches opportunities for UN-supported exploratory missions, at which the AFSC jumped, and began making plans.

As planning moved forward on a mission in South Korea, the AFSC worked with UNKRA. The materials shared between the organizations laid bare the complexity of the aid realm into which the Friends sought to enter. In July Helen Wilson sent Spencer Coxe a packet for voluntary agencies to be hosted by UNKRA. The packet included information on passports valid for Korea, Japanese visas, inoculations and immunizations, and UN certification. Wilson informed Coxe that UNKRA agents would receive volunteers in Tokyo and arrange for their transfer to Pusan. “While in Korea the

35 Lewis Hoskins to E. Raymond Wilson, January 21, 1953, Korea Committees and Organizations: U.S. Advisory Committee on Foreign Aid 1953, Country-Jordan (STA) to Country-Korea General-Dong Surveys & Cave Interviews) 1953, Foreign Service, AFSC Archives. For more on conscientious objectors and wartime service, see Stewart-Winter, “Not A Soldier, Not a Slacker” Gender and History (2007).
representative will be loaned to UNKRA by the voluntary agency on a non-reimbursable loan.” Though UNKRA would provide logistical support and work for AFSC and other voluntary agencies volunteers, the travel expenses would come from the Committee itself. The arrangement between the agency and the Quakers constituted collaboration that both UNKRA and the AFSC sought. By mobilizing church and other voluntary organizations, UNKRA got free labor. They did not have to train these people or pay for their travel expenses. For their part, through this arrangement the AFSC got access they could not otherwise get.36

As part of the plan making, some of the same conversations that had taken place in 1950 and 1951 cropped up again. The hurdles had not gone away. Quakers still raised serious issues with work in Korea, but their priorities had shifted as circumstances had. The AFSC sought to collaborate with Quakers internationally on a Korea mission. But when Julia Branson, AFSC representative working in Central Europe, spoke with FSC folks, the British Friends implied that they wanted a mission to serve North and South Korea. This, Branson thought, would kill the possibility of transnational AFSC collaboration on the mission. Attitudes had hardened in the past

36 Louis W. Schneider to Julia Branson, August 1, 1952, Folder: Country-Korea Reports Nov. 16 to Dec. 4 Report on Mission to Korea, Box: 1952 Country-Japan to country-Korea (Reports), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archive, Philadelphia, PA.
two years. In fall 1950 AFSC leadership had explicitly told Unified Command officials that they wanted to set up a mission serving North Koreans so that they could carry out service on both sides of the conflict. Now in August 1952 Branson told their potential British collaborators that serving the North would be out of the question. The American Friends could not imagine serving the side with which the U.S. was warring without serious pushback from the U.S. government which might kill their mission.

The character of the war had changed in the previous two years. In fall 1950 the war was still in flux. What is more, the U.S. and UN goal for intervention on South Korea’s behalf had not been settled. There were some (like, MacArthur, of course) who thought the war should end in peninsular reunification under U.S. leadership. If this outcome were to happen, as it looked like it might in fall of 1950, then the AFSC proposal to minister to North Korean and Chinese victims of war as well as South Koreans may have seemed palatable to U.S. officials—even in the military. After all, Christian organizations including the AFSC offered relief to the defeated people of Germany and Japan after World War II. But by late 1952, the UN victory MacArthur had imagined in 1950 was nearly entirely out of the question. AFSC service in a nation the

37 Branson had navigated tricky international cooperation on aid projects before—in the 1920s she surveyed the American Hospital in Moscow on behalf of the Quakers, including analyzing Russian and American policy on the transportation of materials. Susan Grant, “The American Hospital in Moscow: A Lesson in International Cooperation, 1917-23” *Medical History* 59 no. 4 (2015): 554-574.

38 Louis W. Schneider to Julia Branson, August 20, 1952, Folder: Country-Korea Reports Nov. 16 to Dec. 4 Report on Mission to Korea, Box: 1952 Country-Japan to country-Korea (Reports), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archive, Philadelphia, PA.
U.S. had defeated was one thing—service to a nation with which they had at best an uneasy peace edged on aiding toward enemy.\textsuperscript{39} With those hurdles in mind, the AFSC still sought collaboration with the FSC. So they worked with the British Friends to set up an explanatory mission with the question of North Korea still up in the air.

AFSC leadership sought qualified Friends to head the mission. Julia Branson and Louis Schneider considered many options for which representatives to send on an exploratory mission to Korea, and settled on two. On November 9, 1952, Jonathan Evans Rhoads and Lewis Waddilove departed from Philadelphia. Rhoads was a professor of surgery at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital and a representative of the AFSC. Waddilove was and administrator and representative of the Friends Service Council. AFSC leadership thought that a potential mission in Korea would best operate with a focus on medicine. Hence their choice of Rhoads as representative. Waddilove worked for a housing development operation—useful given that the Quakers were in 1952 investigating whether they should launch a project of community development in Korea.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{39} In their earliest foreign aid projects, the AFSC espoused a commitment to aiding those on all sides of a conflict. This was the case in the Quakers' German feeding in the 1920s. In that case, however, the Germans had been defeated. The operational policy of aiding those on all sides of the conflict was part of a larger trend in international humanitarianism: the International Red Cross had, from its beginning, practiced a policy of providing relief to any and all belligerents. See Aiken, "Feeding Germany: American Quakers in the Weimar Republic,"; Julia F. Irwin, Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

\textsuperscript{40} American Friends Service Committee, Press Release, November 9, 1952, 2, Folder: Korea-Individuals-Waddilove, Lewis (Survey Trip), Box: 1952 Country-Japan to Country-Korea, Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA.
AFSC leaders emphasized the faith and service backgrounds that Waddilove and Rhoads brought to the work. Rhoads had graduated from Haverford College and was a member of the Germantown Monthly Meeting of Friends, demonstrating Quaker faith as qualification. Furthermore, Rhoads had experience as a missionary working in voluntary aid: he had participated in a Unitarian Service Committee medical education mission to Japan in 1950. Waddilove had even more of that sort of experience: during World War II he was field director of the Friends Ambulance Unit in Italy, Northern Africa, and the Middle East. In selecting Rhoads and Waddilove, the AFSC telegraphed dual priorities of expertise and some level of adherence to Quaker theology—priorities that would guide the mission going forward.

Though plans for a mission in Korea forged ahead, Friends had not abandoned their critiques of American and ROK policy there. Before his departure to Korea, Lewis Waddilove spent some time with American Quakers in Philadelphia and on the West Coast. Waddilove found those conversations fruitful for understanding American attitudes about Korea and framing the Quaker organizations’ priorities where aid to Korea was concerned. Waddilove met with the AFSC and partook in their meetings and

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those of the Staff Council. He also met with experts from the Ford Foundation and the Korean Relief Society. Waddilove sat down with an unnamed “former member of the Korea Government” as well.\textsuperscript{43} Waddilove, writing prior to that meeting, expected his informant to paint a grim picture of the Rhee regime. That information, from Waddilove’s perspective, should not be relayed in public. Waddilove was sensitive to the optics of Quakers’ politics. Their endeavors in late 1952 to get moving on a joint FSC-AFSC mission required cooperation from the U.S. State Department as well as UNKRA and private enterprises. It would not do to alienate the U.S. government by being seen sharing critical takes on the U.S.’s close ally.\textsuperscript{44} Thus even as the AFSC began its venture in Korea, it courted dissident analyses of American involvement there, and Waddilove was sensitive to the reality that keeping its honored place among relief organizations would require the AFSC to build a firewall between its actions and its ideological stance on American intervention.

Based on Rhoads’ and Waddiloves’ two-week trip to Korea in late 1952, the AFSC and the British Quakers developed two primary priorities for Korea programs. First and foremost was the Kunsan provincial hospital. The war had destroyed the

\textsuperscript{43} Waddilove did not identify his informant, but it may have been B.Y. Choy, who had at the outset of the War provided Spencer Coxe with a thoroughly critical analysis of Rhee’s South Korea.

\textsuperscript{44} Lewis Waddilove, November 2, 1952, Folder: Korea-Individuals-Waddilove, Lewis (Survey Trip), Box: 1952 Country-Japan to Country-Korea, Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA.
hospital and there was a terrible dearth of Koreans to rebuild or staff it. AFSC would send a team to do medical work, and also to make improvements to the hospital and train medical professionals. In this way, the mission was about caring. The hospital would provide medical services to Kunsan’s large population of displaced peoples. Exploratory missions found an abundance of severe medical problems, ranging from tuberculosis to worms to 45,000 cases of leprosy. With a shortage of medical experts in the area, severe diseases which flourished in refugees’ unstable and communal housing arrangements, provided a clear avenue for Quaker intervention. But the medical mission was also about reproducing their work in the future. Though repairing, equipping, and staffing the hospital themselves were key priorities that addressed emergent needs, medical training programs were meant to ensure a steady supply of medical professionals (nurses and technicians) to staff not only the Kunsan hospital, but hospitals across the country. 45

The Friends’ second priority was a community center to “develop various services, including refugee re-establishment, vocational training for women, day nurseries for working mothers and a small public health clinic, etc.” The community center would thus support reproductive labor: the public health clinic provide for the well-being of the community, and vocational training and daycare allowing women to

enter the workforce as well as enhance their positions as family caretakers. These programs reflected both the needs on the ground in Korea and Quakers’ priorities.

The AFSC conducted its own survey and set its own priorities, but UNKRA signed off on programs, with an eye to how voluntary programs would address its own priorities, means, and assessments. The American and British Service Friends Committee, as the joint initiative was calling itself at the time, proposed their plans to the Joint Committee for the Development of Rural Services in Korea and the Subcommittee on Small Projects (both under UNKRA) in late winter 1953. In these meetings, committee members consistently voiced support for the Quakers’ proposed programs. Dr. Kim of the Social Affairs Department (Korean government) surveyed Kunsan himself and liaised with locals about the AFSC coming in.47

Committee members also pushed the Quakers to collaborate with other voluntary and government agencies. Augusta Mayerson of UNKRA made it clear that the AFSC would need Korean provincial and national government cooperation, and Mr. Han from the Ministry of Health promised “the fullest cooperation would be extended

by the government.” The minister conducted his own surveys and made recommendations for the AFSC’s projects and pushed them to collaborate with other organizations. The Korean Ministry of Social affairs approved the AFSC’s proposed “Houses for Korea” project for implementation “at any time and place,” demonstrating the Korean government’s understanding that refugee movements had created a housing crisis that needed urgent action, happy to have NGOs take up the mantle. Friends’ projects received widespread support from UNKRA. And UNKRA had a good deal of control over the AFSC’s projects—even as the agency emphasized that voluntary agencies under its programming should have wide latitude. Furthermore, Quakers working in Korea had to navigate expectations for collaboration with UNKRA itself, as well as the Korean government, the U.S. army, and other voluntary agencies. The Friends proved willing to submit to oversight and cooperation, and indeed to work with military institutions, in order to implement the projects they valued most.

The American Friends Service committee finally began its project in Kunsan, South Korea in 1953. The FSU was a joint effort from the AFSC, the Canadian Friends Service Committee, and the British Friends Service Council. From the beginning, the

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48 The promise of “the fullest cooperation” and the realities of budget shortfalls and slow exchange between provincial and national government were two rather different matters. “Extracts from Minutes of Joint Committee for the Development of Rural Service in Korea—pertaining to development of Friends Service work” January-March 1953, Korea Comm. & Organ. UNKRA 1953, Country-Jordan (STA) to Country-Korea (General- Dong Survey & Cave Interviews), Foreign Service, AFSC Archive, Philadelphia, PA, 2.

49 Ibid., 2.

50 Ibid., 2.
mission’s primary objective was to send medical professionals to Kunsan to train more medical professionals, focusing on providing care and equipping Koreans to give out care. Secondary goals included daycare and food for children, and “other community services.” Furthermore, and very importantly, this mission was always and explicitly steered away from able-bodied men: a 1952 survey claimed that eighty-eight percent of the 19,000 refugees in “one area” were “women, children or old men.” Not only did the medical mission attend to the most vulnerable Koreans, it also pointedly did not treat those most likely to serve in the war. Like making medical work a priority, publicizing that the mission in Korea would help women, children, and the elderly helped AFSC members to place their relief work above their concerns about the compliance it required.

In the day-to-day life of the mission, Friends practiced their Quaker service ideals even as they fit comfortably into the highly militarized environment in South Korea. Frank Hunt, along with his wife Pat, ran the Kunsan mission immediately after its opening. The Hunts came to Korea on the heels of serving the AFSC mission in

51 “Help Korea Through Quaker Relief” Pamphlet, Administration Publicity, Country-Jordan to Country-Korea (General-Dong Surveys & Cave Interviews) 1953, Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

52 “Help Korea Through Quaker Relief” Pamphlet, Administration Publicity, Country-Jordan to Country-Korea (General-Dong Surveys & Cave Interviews) 1953, Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA.
Palestine. In their mission journals, both the Hunts chronicled the daily life of the FSU mission, which they transmitted to Friends in the U.S. The Hunts’ experiences in Korea portray the complex relationship between the Friends, their work, and state and military collaborators.

Friends at Kunsan made themselves known to known figures in the surrounding area and strived to cooperate with other institutions and call in favors as much as possible. Upon their arrival in Korea the first person Pat and Frank Hunt spoke to was the governor of Jeolla, who expressed his thanks that Christians from around the world chose to do good works in his country and his province. The Hunts also made contact with KCAC officials immediately. The FSU hospital team sought help obtaining medical supplies and drugs, as well as support repairing the hospital. It was KCAC officials that informed the Hunts that the building materials for the hospital were already in Kunsan, and that the challenge would be finding the money to pay laborers to do the building. In October the provincial public health doctor promised to got to Seoul to ask for Ministry support for labor costs. With meager resources on the ground, the Hunts by necessity

There was a good deal of crossover between the Palestinian and Korean projects, though each required substantially different resources. This crossover was not only present among Quakers—many UN materials that talk about Palestine and Korea in the same breath, and the same terms. The UN considered both Korea and Palestine to be of similar character where displacement of people was concerned—not covered under the same refugee policy that governed administration of displaced peoples in Europe, UN personnel and Western humanitarians saw similarities in the unstable nature of nation-states and borders in both arenas.

“The Education of the Handicapped” UNESCO Gift Coupon Newsletter 1 no. 2 (February 1956), Folder 1: UNKRA-Civilian Relief to Korea-Requests for and Offers of Assistance: UN Women’s Guild Donations, Box 29, S-0526, UN Archives, New York.
formed immediate and close relationships with military and government institutions in order to get work done.\textsuperscript{54}

The day-to-day activities of the Kunsan mission carried out the priorities of the AFSC, but required near-constant cooperation with government and military officials in the region. On October 15, 1953 seven FSU staff arrived in Korea. Frank Hunt went to greet them in Pusan and make introductions. He introduced the FSU personnel around at KCAC, the UNKRA, and other voluntary agencies. Frank knew folks in governmental positions and those working for other missions and he expected his staff to as well.

While Frank picked up the newcomers, Pat made arrangements with the help of a couple locals near their house (Pat referred to them as Adjemoni and Tongsuk). Pat and her helpers installed kitchen cupboards and brought in stores of canned foods. They went to the nearby Army unit to borrow dishes and in the evening Pat oversaw the installation of a drain pipe in the kitchen sink. Frank was expected to greet volunteers, to know important people around Kunsan. Pat stayed at home and made preparations for guests. But both Hunts utilized local contacts: Pat prepared the house with the help of Korean servants and she made sure they had the supplies they needed by turning to

\textsuperscript{54} Pat Hunt, Diary Letter #9, October 29, 1953, Folder: Country-Korea Newsletter (Pat Hunt), Box: 1953 Country-Korea (General Welfare) to (Supplies—Medical), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA, 2.
contacts in the military. Both sides of this day-to-day work, though somewhat divided along lines of gender, were imbedded in the community around Kunsan. Whatever concerns the AFSC had raised in 1950, by 1953, the Friends were imbedded in a military, governmental, and international network upon which they relied upon not only for formal support, but also casual, daily help.

Up until 1953 Friends had expressed serious reservations about working with Rhee’s regime. But as the first days of the Hunts’ arrival in Korea illustrate, the reality on the ground required them to overcome those scruples. It was easy enough for AFSC folks in the United States to critique the South Korean government (though even that grew more difficult and less frequent from 1950 to 1953). But in Korea it was a different matter. Whatever their objections to the ROK’s militarism and Rhee’s propensity for silencing political opponents, in Kunsan Friends could not get by alone. The provincial government with its ties to Seoul was the gate through which FSU workers, their supplies, and their funding flowed.

Adjusting to life at the Kunsan mission required Friends to adapt to Korean civilians and the Korean culture, as well as military and government bureaucracies. As Pat Hunt commented in the mission journal, Friends adapted to Korean life according to their work duties. For example, when the Friends learned Korean, they did so to

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55 Pat Hunt, Diary Letter #9, October 29, 1953, Folder: Country-Korea Newsletter (Pat Hunt), Box: 1953 Country-Korea (General Welfare) to (Supplies—Medical), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA, 2.
communicate with the Koreans on the receiving end of their particular skill sets.

Doctors Ingle and Sandy learned the most obscure Korean words, useful for the hospital if “often not fit for dinner table conversation.” David, the physiotherapist, learned the names of tools, useful in building crutches and prosthetics. “The rest of us—the tea-drinkers—try to learn proper phrases to say ‘how are you,’ and ‘thank you for your kind information.” Pat and Dee, who ran the household, learned the words for kitchen tools and the names of the dishes they ate. They also learned phrases necessary for entertaining, another regular feature of mission life. Pat Hunt presented these disparate vocabularies by way of showing the team was getting used to Kunsan, learning Korean culture, and honing their ability to serve local people.

The FSU mission worked in coordinated teams to carry out its medical and social service work. In Fall 1953, nine Friends worked at the FSU mission, split up into medical and social welfare teams. The four medical team members (one doctor, two nurses, and a physiotherapist) were responsible for tending to patients in the provincial hospital and around the mission. The social welfare team, made up of four members (including Pat Hunt herself), was responsible for surveying communities around Kunsan and writing up reports on living conditions in the region.

56 Pat Hunt, Diary Letter #9, October 29, 1953, Folder: Country-Korea Newsletter (Pat Hunt), Box: 1953 Country-Korea (General Welfare) to (Supplies—Medical), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA, 2.

57 Ibid.
Daily life of the FSU mission centered disciplined service. The morning bells rang at 6:30 every morning, calling the faithful to Christian prayers. Dee prepared a breakfast of bacon, eggs, and toast every morning and the breakfast bell rang at 7:00. After breakfast the whole staff pitched in to clear the table and push it aside to make room for benches for meeting (in the Quaker sense—group worship.) At 8:00 the staff discussed their activities for the day and then went to Korean lessons. The medical team studied with Dan Kwang, and the social welfare team with Tongsuk Cho. By nine the teams set off to their tasks.

The social welfare team split up to survey orphanages, refugee camps, church groups, and any other community endeavor they could find to ask questions about. They wrote up “neat reports” on yellow paper, documenting the “fascinating community and its many needs.” At 12:30 each day staff came back together for lunch, always their Korean meal. After lunch the teams set back out. They would “straggle” back in around 5:30 each evening to find Ingle (one of the British Friends) pouring tea. Dee and Pat helped Adjemoni with dinner, which usually doubled as the women teaching the Korean helper “western” recipes. The team ate their limited meals (limited by both the ingredients and the missions’ ramshackle stoves) often by candle light, since electricity

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58 Pat Hunt, Diary Letter #9, October 29, 1953, Folder: Country-Korea Newsletter (Pat Hunt), Box: 1953 Country-Korea (General Welfare) to (Supplies—Medical), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA, 2.
tended to flicker off with regularity. These days developed into expanded projects and close relationships with the area surrounding Kunsan.\textsuperscript{59}

The Hunts’ perspectives on their leadership of the mission and on conditions in Korea generally speak to the efficacy of their mission efforts, and their embeddedness in the Kunsan area. Pat painted a much rosier picture of conditions in Korea than Frank. This may have been a function of the gendered division of labor between the Hunts. When Pat wrote about the daily life of the mission, she talked of community building, meals, and the maintenance of the FSU staff’s living space. Frank, on the other hand, talked about the KCAC’s priorities and their political implications. From Pat’s perspective—that of building the household and establishing ties to the community in Kunsan—things chugged along well. Pat painted a picture common to voluntary war relief projects: of scrappy resourcefulness, of backward living conditions, of thriving despite challenging conditions. From Frank’s perspective—that of working with government officials—Korea was a mess. Friends and other relief agencies faced constant delays and logistical hurdles due to lack of funds and bureaucratic inefficiencies. Nonetheless, Frank also wrote highly of relations between the mission and the military personnel at Kunsan Air Base. In that respect he painted a positive picture

\textsuperscript{59} Pat Hunt, Diary Letter #9, October 29, 1953, Folder: Country-Korea Newsletter (Pat Hunt), Box: 1953 Country-Korea (General Welfare) to (Supplies—Medical), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA, 2.
of work in Kunsan, despite persistent hurdles where labor and materials were concerned.  

Frank offered the problems at the Pusan Provincial Hospital as illustration of his concerns about local inefficiencies causing substantial hurdles to progress. The hospital required quite a lot of repair in the isolation wing, TB wing, nurse houses, and front section. Some of the damage to the hospital had occurred during the Pacific War, and some repairs had begun under Japanese control. KCAC agreed to furnish the bulk of the building materials: cement, roofing paper, lumber, nails, glass. But they agreed to this with the understanding that the provincial government would supply labor costs for building. The provincial health officer agreed to this in August 1953, and the supplies were ordered. Yet, despite their promises to allocate funds from their budget, the provincial health authorities did not actually have the funds, and required cooperation of the National Assembly in order to receive and use money for labor costs to build the hospital. So at the end of October the building supplies sat at the Pusan Provincial hospital ready to use with no labor or money to pay laborers. The bureaucratic hold up was distressing to Frank Hunt who was understandably concerned with the lack of bureaucratic efficiency displayed in the Pusan case.  

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60 Frank Hunt, Diary Letter #9, October 29, 1953, Folder: Country-Korea Newsletter (Pat Hunt), Box: 1953 Country-Korea (General Welfare) to (Supplies—Medical), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA.  
61 Ibid.
Both Pat and Frank Hunt described the situation as messy, but in different ways and to different ends. As Pat depicted it, the region was dirty, destitute, and lacking in resources. But just such a depiction allowed Pat to showcase how much the war relief community and people broadly relied on one another, pooled resources and practiced selflessness. Depicting Kunsan as a backwater made AFSC projects all the more impressive for their thriving with so little. Frank’s depiction was more cutting, and carried more skepticism about how much the FSU would be able to accomplish. Frank Hunt planted the seeds of doubt about the FSU being able to work despite the complications of the bureaucracy involved.

With Korea in such disrepair, the Kunsan Friends had no choice but to cooperate with governmental and military officials. For example, in 1953 the FSU could not use the port which sat right next to their mission because it required vast reconstruction. Its warehouses were in disrepair, and the harbor needed dredging. The nearby Kumgang River deposited silt in the harbor, so in order to deliver shipments, folks had to transfer goods from ships to barges to reach the shore. Given that Kunsan sitting on a port had played a part in Friends selecting the spot for the FSU mission, this posed a problem. In mid-October, the AFSC sent the Kunsan mission 442 drums of dried milk. With the port in disrepair, staff had to pick up shipments in Pusan and “find the best way to get them

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Frank Hunt, Diary Letter #9, October 29, 1953, Folder: Country-Korea Newsletter (Pat Hunt), Box: 1953 Country-Korea (General Welfare) to (Supplies—Medical), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA, 4.
across country.” In this case FSU staff borrowed three trucks from KCAC and shuttled the milk to Kunsan over two days. The AFSC’s donation and KCAC’s cooperation allowed the FSU to provide “many millions of glasses of milk.” UNKRA recommended a harbor rehabilitation project for Kunsan, one that would dredge the harbor and rebuild warehouses, the dredge was scheduled for arrival from Hawaii in November. In the meantime, hold-ups in rehabilitation projects slowed emergency relief measures, and required the AFSC to borrow military materiel to move relief goods.

Despite AFSC’s serious concerns about cooperation with the military in Korea and FSU publicity materials that advertised that the mission would function independently of state control, staff in Kunsan in 1953 found themselves in need of help from wherever they could get it. The American airbase near the Kunsan mission served as a useful resource for the Friends. While the mission could not use the port in Kunsan to receive goods (or personnel for that matter) the airbase served as a useful means to fly goods in. FSU staff member Don Brenner travelled to Pusan in late October to arrange for penicillin and streptomycin (both antibiotics—streptomycin is used to treat tuberculosis) to be airlifted to the airbase. KCAC coordinated this with the Air Force on

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63 Ibid.

64 Pat Hunt, Diary Letter #8, August 29, 1953, Folder: Country-Korea Newsletter (Pat Hunt), Box: 1953 Country-Korea (General Welfare) to (Supplies—Medical), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA, 2.
the FSU’s behalf. When the AFSC sent the mission a half-ton trailer for storing and hauling goods and team members put the trailer together, they found that several vital pieces were missing. Airmen from the Port Battalion inspected the materials and constructed some of the missing pieces for the AFSC. As Frank Hunt put it, “perfect Service and free.”

Indeed, Frank Hunt spoke highly of the 14th Port Battalion stationed at the base. He described them as being helpful as they could possibly be, earnest to get back stateside, and particularly friendly with the female FSU staff. One Sunday in October the Hunts welcomed the battalion into their home for a tea party. Frank thought they should do more of that sort of thing—both to be friendly neighbors and for the positive morale of the FSU team. AFSC personnel not only cooperated with military institutions, but came to rely on them and consider them friends. Nonetheless the Friends remained critical of conditions in Korea—discomfort that, ironically, would grow as the American military scaled back its participation in relief and recovery efforts.

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65 Frank Hunt, Diary Letter #9, October 29, 1953, Folder: Country-Korea Newsletter (Pat Hunt), Box: 1953 Country-Korea (General Welfare) to (Supplies—Medical), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA, 4.

66 Frank Hunt, Diary Letter #9, October 29, 1953, Folder: Country-Korea Newsletter (Pat Hunt), Box: 1953 Country-Korea (General Welfare) to (Supplies—Medical), Foreign Service, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA, 4.

67 Ibid.
Direct relief projects laid bare the ease with which Friends could provide essential services to Koreans, despite frustrations over the hurdles. The FSU milk program began in November 1953. The first shipment of powdered milk was American government surplus. The AFSC paid for the powdered milk to be shipped to Korea through a fundraising campaign among Quaker children advertised through the *Newsletter for Boys and Girls.*\(^6^8\) The powdered milk was shipped to FSU kitchens, where AFSC workers collaborated with local Korean women to boil giant vats of water and mix the powdered milk into warm servings. FSU workers served the prepared milk at milk serving stations. Children from around Kunsan lined up at the stations clutching bowls and cups to receive warm cups of milk. The AFSC milk program specifically targeted children and nursing mothers: they fed 4,411 people out of 12 kitchens and 17 milk stations from November 1953 to May 1954.\(^6^9\)

The milk feeding stations were in many ways an ideal FSU project. They were predicated on an AFSC principle that began with the organization’s inception: feeding children. The milk stations operated similarly to Quaker projects in Germany following World War I: The American government supplied the food, local collaborators helped to

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\(^6^8\) “Milk for Korean Children” *Newsletter for Boys and Girls* 75 (Spring and Summer 1954), Korea Administration Publicity, Country-Korea (Coms. & Orgs.—K.A.V.A.), Foreign Service, AFSC Archive, Philadelphia, PA.

\(^6^9\) “Milk for Korean Children” *Newsletter for Boys and Girls* 75 (Spring and Summer 1954); Letter, Dolores Brenner to Sister Gabriella Muhlerin, May 23, 1954, Korea Administration Publicity, Country-Korea (Coms. & Orgs.—K.A.V.A.), Foreign Service, AFSC Archive, Philadelphia, PA.
prepare and serve it, and children gathered around to eat it. Feedings in Germany and in Korea flowed from a basic premise of deservingness. Friends served children, pregnant women, and mothers with infants: people they constructed as having little ability to fend for themselves or participate in wage labor. In both interwar Germany and 1953 South Korea, this language assumed that children’s fathers—and pregnant women’s husbands—were not able to work and thus provide food to their families as a result of the war. But somehow, the men were not deemed deserving.70

Milk feeding stations were also an apt FSU project because they combined local Korean, American, international and Quaker resources and expertise. Friends Service Unit staff initiated the project and built the kitchens and milk stations. The AFSC appealed to American donors (mostly Quakers) for funding to ship the milk, and Koreans helped prepare and serve it once it reached the kitchens. The United States government provided the milk itself. UNICEF took over for the U.S. in supplying the milk in April 1954. The switch to UNICEF meshed with Quakers’ stated commitments to multilateral international cooperation on aid projects. Indeed, AFSC leadership had advocated for robust United Nations programs in Asia since at least the start of the war

70 In this understanding the war caused abled bodied men to be unable to provide for their families by a) killing military aged men and thus leaving their families widowed/orphaned; b) wounding military aged men and leaving them unable to work; c) causing infrastructural/cultural/economic damage that left Korea with a dearth of jobs; or d) causing infrastructural damage that left Korea with a dearth of food. Aiken gestures to this logic in the context of post-World War I Germany, but does not explicitly engage gender. Guy Aiken, “Feeding Germany: American Quakers in the Weimar Republic,” *Diplomatic History* 43 no. 4 (September 2019).
and in the milk program those Quakers got to see UNICEF, a UN agency, not only carrying out relief work in Korea, but chipping in on a Quaker program.\textsuperscript{71}

Finally, milk feeding stations were ideal because they could be handed off to locals: model practice for Quaker relief programs. AFSC programs had since the organization’s beginnings been designed to be impermanent. Combined with that principle was the Quakers’ ambivalence about American imperialism. Though they wished to be a bold and positive presence in regions with hungry, displaced, and injured people, AFSC members fretted about whether their work expanded American influence abroad. Thus FSU programs were always meant to be transferable; that is, programs had local participation built in such that Koreans could understand how programs operated and take on the coordinating work themselves.\textsuperscript{72}

By a year into the Kunsan mission, operations appeared to be chugging along well. The milk program had been a rousing success, and the FSU’s hospital repair and medical training programs were in full swing. AFSC officials, however, had never completely shook their unease with conditions and their contributions to American power in Korea. Furthermore, despite successes, Kunsan mission projects had been

\textsuperscript{71} “Milk for Korean Children” \textit{Newsletter for Boys and Girls} 75 (Spring and Summer 1954); Letter, Dolores Brenner to Sister Gabriella Muhlerin, May 23, 1954, Korea Administration Publicity Country-Korea (Coms. & Orgs. — K.A.V.A.), Foreign Service, AFSC Archive, Philadelphia, PA.

\textsuperscript{72} “Milk for Korean Children” \textit{Newsletter for Boys and Girls} 75 (Spring and Summer 1954); Letter, Dolores Brenner to Sister Gabriella Muhlerin, May 23, 1954, Korea Administration Publicity, Country-Korea (Coms. & Orgs. — K.A.V.A.), Foreign Service, AFSCArchive, Philadelphia, PA.
dogged by bureaucratic inefficiencies, which Quakers took to be a product of Korean governance.\footnote{“Report on Korea from Louis W. Schneider” November 11, 1954, Korea Administration Publicity, Country-Korea (Coms. & Orgs. — K.A.V.A.), Foreign Service, AFSC Archive, Philadelphia, PA.}

A year into its start, the FSU was, to AFSC commenters, a rousing success despite the considerable hurdles Korea offered. Louis Schneider (stationed in Saigon at the time) visited the Kunsan mission in October 1954. Schneider prepared a confidential report about his trip for AFSC leadership in Philadelphia. Overall, Schneider found the mission to running well. He reported that the hospital ran exceptionally well, especially in comparison to other provincial hospitals. The nurses’ training program, started in April 1954, was “held in the highest esteem everywhere.”\footnote{“Report on Korea from Louis W. Schneider” November 11, 1954, Korea Administration Publicity, Country-Korea (Coms. & Orgs. — K.A.V.A.), Foreign Service, AFSC Archive, Philadelphia, PA.} Schneider also offered recommendations about next steps. He thought that a housing project was the clear path forward in Kunsan. In his tour Schneider saw the dire conditions in which refugees in Kunsan lived, and thought housing not only provided a much-needed service, but also would have “more long-lasting significance than anything else they could do.”\footnote{Ibid., 4.}

Schneider’s letter was also laced with his antipathy the Korean government. Commenting on the FSU’s efforts to help the several thousand unhoused people living near the Kunsan mission, Schneider found existing infrastructure—whether by the UN
or the Korean government—totally lacking. Noting that it was only through Quaker efforts that relief workers had an accurate accounting of the number of the widows living in Kunsan (4,000, opposed to earlier estimates of 700), he asserted “the importance of our workers [the FSU] having as direct and close association with the people and their problems rather than depending on bureaucratic channels for access.”

Schneider included some bold remarks on Rhee, claiming the President’s priorities hampered relief efforts. His intense militarization drew resources away from developing schools, industry, and hospitals. Schneider assessed that Rhee’s aspirations for a war to conquer all of Korea would doom all that the AFSC did to provide shelter and care for the victims of war. According to Schneider, Rhee wanted aid to go into visible displays of development: the president reportedly expressed a preference for “capital investments in buildings and factories,” as these sent a message of progress and uplift.

Schneider did not hide his distaste: buildings meant to display Korea’s grandeur and development were in disuse for lack of trained staff. Moreover, Schneider stated quite blatantly that he did not think the FSU mission could carry on more than a few more years because the political climate created an uphill battle, one in which the community development


77 Ibid., 4.

78 Ibid.
goals of the Friends Service Unit would always chafe against the military and economic priorities of the people in charge.79

Schneider reveals a complicated reality of the Friends’ approach in Korea. The Friends were aware that their projects likely could not last long, even as Schneider authored his report just a year after the start of the Kunsan mission. The FSU had achieved some astonishing feats in that year—the positive reputations of the hospital and the nurses and technicians training programs attest to this. But the Friends had also taken the measure of the ROK’s priorities and found them lacking and incompatible with long-term AFSC aims. Schneider thus thought the mission could last no more than four or five more years. How, then, could Friends invest in long-term projects, knowing that they were not likely to remain in the region long term? The answer, to Schneider’s mind, lay in creating projects that could have long term impacts, but could also be handed off to local leadership, or ended without leaving recipients in the lurch. Hence his recommendations of projects like expanding housing, which would not require the kind of maintenance needed from medical relief projects.80

Though he could not have anticipated it, Louis Schneider’s 1954 report on the Friends Service Unit distilled all the Friend’s triumphs and frustrations from across their roughly decade-long foray into service in Korea into seven pages. Schneider expressed

79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
hopes that the FSU might extricate itself from military and government aid bureaucracies; and recommended next steps for projects that, by his own admission, were likely to receive financial and logistical support from Korean national and provincial governments and the United Nations. He admired Koreans’ resilience and cooperation with each other and aid workers; yet expressed doubts about Koreans’ capacity for responsible self-rule. While praising the effectiveness of Quaker projects, he predicted that they would need to cease work in South Korea in the next four to five years. That prediction turned out to be correct. Schneider also correctly anticipated that American Quakers’ hopes for long term, development based projects would lie north of the 38th parallel, though those projects would take another 25 years to reach fruition.81

For roughly five years the Kunsan mission carried on. Quaker aid workers cared for sick Koreans in the clinic, trained nurses, supplied lumber for homes which they helped refugees build, and crafted prosthetics. In somewhat less successful projects, Friends offered training to war widows in industrial and domestic skills and administered small business loans. They fashioned the prosthetic limbs lab as a training facility and small business. Friends made contacts among the displaced masses of Kunsan, but also among Korean elites and American missionaries, federal agents, and

81 Ibid.
diplomats. Some Koreans even expressed interest in Quakerism, a happy side effect for FSU agents who made it a point not to proselytize.82

By the end of 1957, however, the Kunsan mission was in decline. The closing of the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency meant the end of reliable funding not tied to a military hierarchy for the mission, without which maintaining and staffing the Kunsan mission would be expensive and exceedingly difficult. Despite Friends’ search for autonomy in Korea, it turned out the Kunsan mission relied on UNKRA support.83

Ultimately, however, the decision to close the Kunsan mission was a moral one. At the end of the Kunsan mission, Friends who worked there lauded the efforts and the spirit of the Koreans with whom they interacted, but lamented the limits of Friends’ capacity to transform the world. Reporting on the mission as he left the country, Allan Reynolds admitted to his own naiveté: “I went to Korea expecting that there were things we should do to help them there, and that I might make a contribution. I came back


feeling for the moment that they need nothing so much as to be left alone.” Reynolds expressed regret that Friends—and all aid workers—had not done greater due diligence before coming to Korea, intimating that depictions of a destitute Korea were inaccurate contributions to an imperious American attitude. Reynolds predicted Korea was on the edge of a dangerous precipice, and pointed to Syngman Rhee as a dangerous threat to any future peace: “the situation in Korea is too much marked with corruption and decay.” Everything from poorly-managed orphanages to thieving officials selling relief goods on the illicit market spoke to Reynolds of deeply-seated problems that no American aid worker had the will or capacity to root out. Moreover, with Rhee’s government sinking so many of Korea’s resources into militarization, and with the U.S. backing such moves as a means to outsource the fight against communism in Asia to Asians, foreign aid was squandered by the Korean government on war-making.

Reynolds also raised objections to American policy in Korea and globally. Having travelled widely, he found American antipathy for communism a much more corrosive force than communism itself. In Korea this played out through quashing leftist movements in the post-World War II occupation era, through backing South Korea’s


85 Ibid., 3.

86 Ibid., 12
militarism as a bulwark against communism, and supporting economic policies that further entrenched American influence in the ROK.\textsuperscript{87}

As the mission closed down over 1957, Quaker leadership echoed Reynolds’ laments about poor conditions in Korea. Though not in total accordance over whether they should have started the mission, Friends agreed that conditions had become impossible. Between the U.S. prioritizing anticommunist economic and security concerns, and Syngman Rhee sinking all available resources into the military, Friends’ efforts to build lasting caring institutions at best could not take hold; and at worst they supported the militarist and repressive moves Quakers found abhorrent.\textsuperscript{88} Louis Schneider’s predictions of three years earlier came true—the Friends could no longer abide the political and economic situation in Korea. The concerns that Spencer Coxe and the Shanghai Friends raised at the start of the war were not dead—only buried. And now that Korea seemed an endless quagmire, not an urgent hot zone, the Quakers returned to their anti-imperial principles.

Despite the strong pull of American imperialism, the AFSC had tried hard to chart its own path. One might read the Quakers’ pulling out of Kunsan in 1958 as giving

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 23.

up on trying to use American resources while rejecting American imperialism. But the
Quakers succeeded in getting things done in Korea for eight years, whatever their
scruples. AFSC leaders often sidestepped their own objections to compliance with
American empire by highlighting the necessity of their work. The urgency of the
situation outweighed ideological problems the organization had with American moves,
and Friends put American resources to work to advance their own approach to service
in Korea. One might also view the Kunsan mission as a lesson for the AFSC: when
American Quakers went to Vietnam the following decade, they took on a much different
posture toward cooperation with American institutions. In another light, the Maryknoll
and AFSC stories together showcase how differently various American relief workers
abroad imagined their place in the world. Were one organization interpreted new Cold
War anxieties as a call to work to expand American influence abroad, the other saw
those anxieties as an alarming harbinger for global militarism and imperialism. Each
organization responded in accordance to their reading of the situation and the tenets of
their faith, resulting in dissimilar interpretations and policies. Far from being simply
tools of empire, the aid workers in the Maryknoll Sisters Mission and the Friends Service
Unit had their own visions for the purpose and meaning of American influence abroad.89

89 Melani McAlister and David Hollinger each in their own context grapple with the agency of American
missionaries abroad. McAlister especially notes how evangelical missionaries in Africa carried out imperial
moves in intimate contact with Africans. Both historians, however, come to the conclusion that the
missionaries they study are more than imperial tools. Indeed, they find that their missionaries shaped
American policy at least as much as (and arguably more than) they shaped global policy on behalf of

“When Korea is free gain, it will build—not an old Korea bound by old traditions and old ways of doing things, but the new, bringing new life and new freedom to the people so long repressed. Christian women will help rebuild in the faith that through this Christian lay Movement, womanhood may breathe a new life into an old people.”

—Esther Park, 1950

“Western Influence is having an effect on women and they are eager to learn Western ways of living, particularly about family life, boy and girl relations, and cooking… Women are more and more taking a social position in the community along with their husbands, and many of them are found in key leadership positions. More and more women are seeking college education and are entering the fields of law, international relations, medicine, and such professions.”

—Ruth Borden, 1956
Esther Park, American advisor to the Korean YWCA from 1947 to 1977, and Ruth Borden of the National Board of the YWCA of the U.S.A. certainly agreed on one thing: Korean women were on their way up. Writing at the start of the war in August 1950, Esther Park emphasized the democratic impulses displayed by Christian Korean women. She reported to the American YWCA that Korean women required financial and training support, but that they had a bright future ahead.¹ Six years later and across a great expanse of the war’s devastation, Borden provided a similar, if perhaps not quite as inspirational analysis: Korean women were interested in “Western” practices—dress, cooking, dating, marriage, and professional and economic life.² Both women saw in this great potential: the potential to bring American influence to bear on Korean women, and the potential for Korean women to enter and shape Korean public life as the nation rebuilt in the wake of the war.

This chapter focuses on how international Christian intervention in Korea shaped ideas about gender in the 1950s. Intervening in histories of Christian missionary work in Korea, the chapter argues that the Korean War provided impetus for imbedding


American ideals in Korean society. Focusing on the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), we can see how the war both dramatically disrupted Korean society, and provided a catalyst for the deepening influence of international organizations in Korea. Throughout the war, YWCA projects pivoted to focus on relief and rehabilitation projects. While this interrupted the sorts of projects the Association had been doing before 1950, the war also provided it with resources from and access to the Korean government, the UNKRA, and Armed Forces Assistance to Korea. Furthermore, the war sparked investment from the YWCA of the U.S.A., as that organization committed itself to systematic financial and training support for the YWCA of Korea. What resulted was an expansion of YWCA projects and infrastructure in Korea. At the same time, Korean, U.S. and World WYCA women articulated a new vision of the Korean woman—a woman who bore all the expectations of an independent and traditional Korea, and a worldly and Americanized international order. Thus through the YWCA we see in the fluid time between war and recovery how multiple forces competed and collaborated to form an emergent liberal Protestant national South Korean identity. It also shows us how this burgeoning national identity was a construction of American imperialism as well as Korean nationalism.

YWCA actions in the 1950s drew on a deeper history of intimate contact between American missionary women and Korean women. But the 1950s were also particular, as war’s upheaval altered the social position of American and Korean women. The YWCA
saw an opportunity to remake womanhood with adjustments that reflected dynamic new gender norms in both the U.S. and Korea.³

In examining the YWCA’s activities, this chapter ruminates on the blurry line between relief and development. The YWCA tended to silo “relief” and “emergency” projects as contingent, extraordinary components of the Association’s overall project. As this chapter shows, however, there was no clear line between programs that were a matter of course and those that were a product of the war. All YWCA projects in Korea after the summer of 1950 existed in the context of a country deeply scarred by the war, and all projects had to address that context. Regardless of how organizations envisioned their contributions to Korea, war relief provided an entry way into work there. It was the immediate problem that required attention, and a jumping-off point for longer-term YWCA projects. That development and relief were intertwined matters a great deal to our understanding of American empire in the Cold War. Inasmuch as historians have seen development (and its ideological partner, modernization) as a key mode of American intervention and asserting hegemony abroad, it is vital that we recognize the role that relief played in supporting and shaping development-minded projects.⁴


The war and its aftermath were a vital remobilizing moment for Protestant missionaries in Korea. The 1950s were an inflection point for the YWCA, a time that reflected deep American Christian interventions in Korea, and one that informed the organization’s prominent role as an internationalist player in Korean society.5

The YWCA emerged from a Protestant missionary tradition in Korea stemming back to the 1880s. Protestant missions had developed in Korea as early as the 1880s. This coincided with two important moments: the expansion of Protestant missions in East Asia generally, and the “opening” of Korea to the United States. Missionary efforts in Korea proved particularly fruitful. Their legacy was schools: denominational schools,

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5 Scholarship on Christianity and gender in Korea has recognized the vitality of Protestant missionary movements in the country, and specifically the YWCA’s contributions to social and political developments. But studies tend to focus on either the founding decade (the 1920s) or on the emerging democratic period of the late twentieth century. They thus neglect the 1950s, and gloss over the contributions to constructing nationalist Korean women that the YWCA made in the reconstruction period. Furthermore, by glossing over the 1950s, scholars have not fully contented with how the war contributed to the organization and to the internationalism that shaped its ideals. Hyaeweol Choi, Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women Old Ways (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 150; Chung-shin Park, “Protestantism in Late Confucian Korea: Its Growth and Historical Meaning” Journal of Korean Studies 8 (1992). Regarding broader YWCA movements see, Nancy Boyd, Emissaries: The Overseas Work of the American YWCA 1895-1970 (New York: Woman’s Press, 1986); Amanda Izzo, Liberal Christianity and Women’s Global Activism: The YWCA of the U.S.A. and the Maryknoll Sisters (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2018).
especially for girls and women, cropped up all over the peninsula. Some scholars argue that Korea’s existing gender hierarchy created unique proselytizing opportunities. Korean women, by tradition largely excluded from public life, would have been reached very little by male missionaries or by male aid workers or diplomatic envoys. Women-to-women missionary endeavors, however, found traction and access. This had a couple effects. First, it created a mandate for women-centered missionary activity, occasionally couched in language of liberating Korean women from strict gendered strictures. Second, this dynamic created a need for a sizeable and active cohort of women involved in missionary activity in Korea. This led as well to the creation of Christian intuitions for women in Korea, especially schools and healthcare institutions but also robust Bible study programs, and in some cases, scholarships for Korean women to study at Christian colleges in the U.S. Thus by the 1940s and 1950s, there was a sizeable

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7 This particular narrative is more telling of the subjectivity of missionary women than of Koreans. As Hyaewool Choi has argued, Korean women harnessed shifting ideas about Confucianism and a transformed political system due to Japanese colonialism alongside growing missionary institutions to reshape Korean womanhood. That is to say American missionary women did not impose liberal Christian gender ideals on Korea—they were one part of a recipe in which Korean women were ultimately the cooks. Nonetheless, American missionary women had ample opportunities for work and activism in Korea, which they used to build lasting women-centered institutions. See Choi, Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); R. Pierce Beaver, American Protestant Women in World Mission: History of the First Feminist Movement in North America (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1980); Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Connie A. Shemo, eds., Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

8 Kim, Imperatives of Care: Women and Medicine in Colonial Korea (2019).
Christian minority in South Korea, and one accustomed to intimate interventions by western missionaries, especially in creating opportunities for women.9

The National Association also stemmed from the international YWCA movement and a burgeoning Korean women’s movement.10 The Young Women’s Christian Association, founded in London in the mid-nineteenth century, valued lay organizing and evangelism in the spirit of uplifting women to live productive Christian lives. By the early twentieth century, the YWCA spread around the world, especially targeting poor and working women.11 A group of prominent, Christian, and educated Korean women founded the YWCA of Korea in 1922. Though influenced by missionary women, it was Korean women who led the initiative to form the Association and have it recognized. Though Korea was under Japanese imperial control in 1922, the Japanese YWCA allowed Korea its own Association independent of the Japanese one.

The YWCA was the first organization in Korea to work across denominational lines, and organizing women on political and social, as well as religious, issues. Indeed, the Association was involved in the women’s movement, the rural community movement, and the nationalist movement.12 During the imperial period, the Korean

9 Park, “Protestantism in Late Confucian Korea: Its Growth and Historical Meaning.”
10 Hyaewool Choi, Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea.
12 Of the YWCA’s non-denominational status, Esther Park reported to the YWCA of the U.S.: “The YWCA has been able to bring together people of various religious affinities and denominations. Where this is so
YWCA operated independently at the allowance of the Japanese association. Though tied up in nationalist Korean politics, the Korean YWCA and its members were not necessarily or universally anti-imperialist. Indeed, founder Kim Hwal-lan expressed a good deal of pro-Japanese sentiment during the 1930s and 40s. The YWCA supported initiatives that upheld Korean culture and history, while being flexible on the issue of political independence. As such the YWCA of Korea was able to exist as an independent national organization even while it represented a country that was not itself independent.

much division in the churches as there seems to be at the present time, this factor is very important.” Park echoed the sentiment of contemporary ecumenical organizations: they reasoned that nondenominational service that sprung up in mid-twentieth century allowed for the pooling of resources, and created a kind of streamlined proselytization as the minutiae of doctrine took the backseat to basic Protestant messages. Furthermore, inter-denominational programs like the YWCA and CWS had a service-first approach. Finally, from and aid workers’ perspectives, ecumenism was the best way forward in the just global advancement of Christianity. Jill K. Gill, “The Politics of Ecumenical Disunity: The Troubled Marriage of Church World Service and the National Council of Churches” Religion and American Culture 14 no. 2 (Summer 2004): 175-212; Esther Park to Fay Allen, October 11, 1957, Folder 3: YWCA—Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy—South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

The Korean YWCA was absorbed into the Japanese YWCA in 1938, and was mostly defunct until after World War II. Esther Park, “Women of Korea” The Women’s Press, 1950, Folder 3: YWCA—Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy—South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

Kim was a prominent educator, politician and feminist. The founder of Korea Times, Kim comes up a lot in American documentation on Korea from the 40s and 50s. Western documents refer to her by the Romanized version of her name, Helen Kim. Bahk Eun-ji, “Ewha Students Demand Ex-Leader Statue Down,” Korea Times, May 31, 2013.

Hyaewool Choi, Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea, 150.
That complexity shaped its role in Korean society. The context in which the organization emerged was not only imperial, but also internationalist. The YWCA was an existing global organization, and the Korean women who formed their association had to contend with global racial and social hierarchies. Kim Hwal-lan claimed that she and the women with whom she collaborated felt resistance from the World Association because “in no other country had the women of the land taken the entire initiative and responsibility for the beginning of their organization.” The missionary, international, and imperial implications of the foundation of the YWCA of Korea shaped the character of the organization in ensuing decades. The fact that the National Association had to fight hard to receive recognition from the World YWCA perhaps speaks to paternalist assumptions about Koreans’ capacity to build and lead their own institutions. Even beyond that, as Kim noted, the nationalist bent of non-white women was met with trepidation among World YWCA leaders.

Korean women continued to contend with the global hierarchies built into the YWCA. Indeed, new American interest in Korea from the late 1940s through the 1950s would exacerbate the problem. At the time when American YWCA eyes were most

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16 Hyaeweol Choi, Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women Old Ways 150.

17 Hyaeweol Choi, Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women Old Ways. Paternalistic attitudes dogged the YWCA for decades. Amanda Izzo shows, for example, that despite the YWCA of the U.S.A.’s best intentions, associations were rife with institutional racism, and minority constituencies “overseen by paternalistic administrators.” Izzo, Liberal Christianity and Women’s Global Activism (2018): 21. The Wilsonian-style internationalism that emerged in the World YWCA after the Great War valued cooperation and nationalist empowerment, but like Wilson, imagined white and western nations and people at the helm of the ship.
intently trained on Korea, the devastation of the Korean War, the general lack of infrastructure in Korea, and currency instability which forestalled financial independence among Korean associations all intensified western YWCA women’s notions that Korean women could not make it on their own.

Foundational hurdles aside, the Korean YWCA flourished. Whatever the challenges of Japanese imperialism and Western paternalism, the Association’s programs of educational and professional opportunities for women were well-received by the Korean public. After its founding in 1922, the YWCA of Korea steadily expanded for fifteen years. Korean women established four local associations and fourteen student groups in 1923. In 1924 the National Association held its first annual national meeting. That same year the Korean YWCA solidified its international position, holding its ceremony of affiliation with the World YWCA. In 1938 YWCA activities were partially curtailed as Japanese imperialism intensified. Scaled back operations continued for the next decade as World War II exacerbated Korea’s instability and colonized position.18

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18 “Brief Sketch of the YWCA Growth in Korea,” pamphlet (n.d.), Folder 3: YWCA—Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy—South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA. As Japanese control over Korea deepened in the 1930s, imperial administrators cracked down on both Western and native Korean institutions. The Korean YWCA struggled to operate during the Pacific War not only because of the tumult of the conflict, but also because of restrictive imperial measures meted out by the Japanese. On imperial crackdowns on Christian and missionary activity in Korea, see Dae Young Ryu, “Missionaries and Imperial Cult: Politics of the Shinto Shrine Rites Controversy in Colonial Korea,” *Diplomatic History* 40 no. 4 (2016): 606-634.
From the late 1940s through the end of the 1950s, the Korean YWCA was an organization in transition, struggling to find stability in a markedly unstable time and place. In 1947 the Foreign Division of YWCA of U.S.A. sent Esther Park to Korea to serve as advisory secretary. This signaled a re-invigoration of YWCA of Korea activities. It also signaled the start of greater American interest in Korean YWCA activities, interest which the Korean War three years later intensified.19

The start of the war in June 1950 threw the YWCA, along with the rest of Korea, into chaos. Americans, including Ester Park, evacuated. Amidst the destruction in Seoul, the YWCA’s national headquarters were damaged, and the National Association relocated to Pusan, where it remained until battle lines settled in Spring 1951.20

During the war, YWCA women participated in relief activities, addressing particularly the damage the war brought to already vulnerable populations in Korea, namely, women and children. The Association also contributed its infrastructure to the


20 Ibid.
war effort as the Korean military quartered in Association buildings. As Park described in *YWCA Magazine*, “War with its aftermath halted the progress of Association work to some extent, but it found the women active in emergency feeding, relief work among refugees, helping at the Army hospitals, taking care of orphans and many others—tasks not often considered a regular part of the YWCA program.” Park went on to say that the war created unusual circumstances and instability, which deepened YWCA Korea reliance on help from outside Korea. She identified key sources of funding and support: the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency, American-Korean Foundation, Armed Forces Assistance to Korea, and the Commission on World Service of the Evangelical Reformed Church. The YWCA’s move to Pusan, though disruptive, put the Association in proximity to the heart of UN, American and South Korean wartime administration. The war thus derailed some Korean YWCA plans. But it also solidified international connections between the Korean YWCA and World and other national Associations, as well as other international organizations. The produced cooperation

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between the YWCA and state and non-state organizations. The Widow’s Project started with a program where war widows sold their wares in Army Post Exchanges throughout Korea, calling them the “Widow’s Exchange Shop.” Widows sold “handicrafts” and other articles, like scarves, post cards, and embroidery—things an American soldier might take home as a souvenir of their time in Korea. Esther Park brokered the deal that allowed the Widow’s Exchange Shop to sell in Army PX’s. The widows’ exchange shop demonstrates Korean YWCA direct cooperation with the U.S. military (specifically), facilitated through an American interlocutor.

Figure 10: Children lined up at a YWCA milk station, 1952, Children and Teens, Box 1012: Countries, Jordan—Korea (Bldgs—Children and Teens) Series I: Prints and Negatives, Record Group 9: Photographs, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

The U.S. Army also made contributions to support YWCA relief programs which bolstered the Association’s contributions to serving the people of the war-beaten capital. The Army donated tents and materials to maintain school programs in the winter in Seoul while YWCA buildings were under construction or otherwise unavailable. Soldiers also installed a water system in the National Board office. Lieutenant General John B. Coulter, writing to Esther Park, acknowledged that this cooperation enabled recovery efforts: “In providing assistance, we are always guided by the knowledge that from your organization positive assistance is provided to the Korean people, and I am aware that another step is taken in the reconstruction of this war-damaged land.”

The war thus created multiple modes of cooperation between the YWCA and American imperial mechanisms, which themselves fed into lasting YWCA programs. Both Park and General Coulter explicitly highlighted the nature of these contributions and valued the contributions to war relief.

YWCA wartime activities influenced the Association’s development-oriented projects. Whatever Park’s claims about the war interrupting normal operations, it expanded the organization’s purview. And, importantly, the activities that the Association prioritized during and immediately following the war did not go away as Korea reconstructed. Rather, those activities became systematized and embedded in

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YWCA programs. A 1952 World Fellowship Publicity Kit listed the Association’s current wartime ventures: visiting wounded soldiers in hospitals; distributing newspapers to soldiers; serving barley tea morning to evening; distributing food to “special” patients; helping out nurses; running errands for patients; collecting clothing to distribute to refugees; feeding refugee children; distributing relief goods sent by U.S.A. YWCA; a project of feeding 700 children and old people in one refugee center; establishing orphanages that could house 95 children; sewing and knitting classes for refugees and orphans; English and Bible classes; establishing a girls’ middle school; holding prayer meetings; sending representatives to Student Summer School in the Hanan area; orchestrating a national convention.26 These activities were a mish-mash of programs specific to wartime (like caring for hospitalized soldiers); relief work that would span beyond war; and more regular programs. In 1953, the National Association moved back to Seoul and “resumed work mainly with war widows and emergency work through milk stations.”27 The only activities that would go away after summer 1953 were the ones pertaining to care for wounded soldiers, and milk stations, which ceded ground to more systematic programs for indigent children. The important reality of wartime


YWCA programming was that these programs were not extraordinary: they stayed in place after the war’s end, and some transformed into more permanent programs.

The YWCA of Korea in the 1950s reflects an intensely international and internationalist organization. Though the YWCA had been founded in the 1920s by Korean women, by the end of the 1950s the National Association sought out and catered to women from around the globe living in Korea. These women were generally in Korea as part of diplomatic or humanitarian missions.\(^{28}\) Moreover, by the 1950s, the YWCA of Korea was also largely directed in cooperation with non-Korean women. Though World YWCA direction came from multiple Anglophone countries, the United States had the strongest hand in shaping the Korean organization. American influence ran deep in the YWCA of Korea, even when international interlocutors were not American.\(^{29}\) This is because much of the Korean YWCA agenda-setting and financing emerged from American intervention.

Esther Park best exemplifies American influence in the Korean YWCA. Park was born near Pyongyang in 1902. The next year her family moved to Hawai‘i where her parents worked as laborers on sugar plantations on the Big Island and later Oahu. Park


received her bachelor’s degree from the University of Hawai‘i and then went on to work for the Hawaiian YWCA, before going to work for the Korean YWCA in 1947.30 Park became an American citizen in 1955, after fifty years of living in the U.S. and participating actively in Korean communities.31 Park positioned herself as both an expert on Korea and a fully American woman—well poised both to guide the Korean YWCA, and to interpret events in Korea for a western audience. It would be unfair to simplify Park’s position in respect to Korea as purely Orientalist.32 While Park was given a good deal of power, some of it perhaps undue, simply by circumstance of her American background, her expertise was derived from far more than her Korean and American upbringing. Park came from a family of Korean nationalists and was well-informed in regards to Korean independence. Living in Hawai‘i she crossed paths with other Korean nationalists who called the islands home, as well as the small but steady stream of Koreans who stopped in Hawai‘i either on their way to the continental U.S., or on their way back to Korea. Furthermore, in Hawai‘i people of Korean ancestry, especially

30 Anne Soon Choi, “‘Hawaii Has Been My America:’ Generation, Gender, and Korean Immigrant Experience in Hawai‘i before World War II,” *American Studies* 45 no. 3 (Fall 2004), pp. 142.


32 Theorist Edward Said developed the concept of Orientalism to understand the ways that “western” and colonizing powers stereotyped Arabs. In this framework, westerners positioned “the orient” (that is, Asia) as “backward” as a means to justify European domination. Said created the “Orientalist” framework specifically for study of the Arab Middle East. Christina Klein worked with Said’s theory to apply the concept to East Asia in the Cold War. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).
children, could find educational and community initiatives to maintain language skills and other ties to Korean culture. Indeed, Park attended Korean Girls Seminary, an elementary school founded by none other than Syngman Rhee. Other women who worked in the YWCA in Korea for longer may have been more qualified to run things, but if the American YWCA was determined to send an advisor, Esther Park was as well-qualified as they could hope for. This is not to say that Park did not serve in an imperial capacity, but rather that she did not serve entirely from an American imperialist position.33

Park’s influence was written all over the National YWCA agenda. Park started her work as advisor for the Korean YWCA in 1947, right as the South was shaping its independent nationhood, and recovering from World War II. She evacuated during the war, returning in 1951, ready once more to shape the nation as it faced ground-up rebuilding.34 Though the Association had been around for twenty-five years, the last decade had substantially diminished its operational capacity. Thus when Park started her work for the Korean YWCA, she oversaw the rebuilding of the organization at the

33 Choi, “‘Hawaii Has Been My America:’ Generation, Gender, and Korean Immigrant Experience in Hawai‘i before World War II,” American Studies 45 no. 3 (Fall 2004), pp. 142.

same time that Korea was building its national identity. Park thus had a huge hand in shaping the Korean YWCA and setting its new priorities in a new (seemingly) post-war context.

The YWCA of Korea was also subject to American influence through funding. The war particularly exacerbated this reality. The YWCA headquarters in Seoul was largely destroyed, and local buildings around the country ruined or abandoned. With many of its buildings and associations destroyed in the war, the organization received funding from the American YWCA (as well as other Anglophone national associations), UNKRA, and AFAK. Funding from these institutions dictated YWCA priorities. It is for this reason that the National YWCA building in the 1950s served as an event space especially for the international set living in Korea. The Korean YWCA had to balance its own priorities, themselves influenced by international intervention in the organization, with the projects that international and heavily American institutions were willing and able to fund.

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35 Of course 1947 turned out to be more inter-war than post-war for Korea. The Korean YWCA, though interrupted and reinterpreted by the Korean War, nonetheless carried over its post-World War II agenda. Indeed, much of the YWCA agenda centered around attempts to recapture the priorities of the 1940s even while enduring intense upheaval from the Korean War.

36 “Notes on a conversation Fay Allen had with Ruth Borden,” October 1957, Folder 3: YWCA—Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy—South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA; UNKRA and AFAK mostly supported infrastructure building and repairs, so the YWCA was able to make necessary repairs to their physical space. In order to fund projects, however, they had to accommodate other programs from which they could extract cash to cover operating costs, which cut into time to host YWCA programs in YWCA buildings.
The YWCA was embedded in war relief at least in part because of the disproportionate impact that war had on women. The Association was aware of this reality, and sought to address it head-on. As one December 1954 report explained it:

“Disruption of family life, dislocation, loss of family support, increased poverty, crowded living conditions, health hazards, food shortage, economic instability, had a terrific effect on women. Women were suddenly forced to assume complete responsibility for their family in many instances… This placed greater responsibilities and opportunities on the YWCA to help meet the increased need for educating women for jobs and citizenship responsibility.”

The war afforded the Association an opportunity to step up, just as the shifting political landscape offered Korean women new opportunities, for better and worse, for political and economic participation. At the same time, the war offered a bleak and unstable landscape, in which new opportunities for women were all the more challenging to navigate.

As battle lines settled but the war raged on, YWCA programs took shape to address urgent needs of young women in Korea. Programs took advantage of the influx

37 “YWCA of Korea” December 1954, Folder 3: YWCA — Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy — South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA.
of funds and people into South Korea to advance the Association’s goals around training
Korean women for leadership and participation in a capitalist economy. The Tongnae
Rural Training Center showcased the kinds of educational, development, and relief
projects that the Korean YWCA worked on in the 1950s. Australian missionaries started
the center before World War II, and passed it off to the Korean YWCA in 1948. Tongnae
was a district in Northeast Pusan, as such, the center and the surrounding area were site
of intense commotion during and following the war. During the war the ROK Army
quartered in the main building of the center. Nonetheless the YWCA reopened the
center in 1952 for seventeen girls in need of shelter. The girls stayed in the chicken
coops. UNKRA helped “in getting the chicken coops into a more habitable condition.”
Thus the center’s development was both hampered by the war, and made use of war
relief. This sparked some annoyance from YWCA women—the Army promised the
return of the main building in June 1954, but then kept delaying their evacuation by
continuing to use the building as a dispensary. Canadian Barbara Broadfoot, the center’s
director in 1954, speculated that the Army would keep needing the building for the

38 In addition to the YWCA’s Rural Training Center, Tongnae was also home to a UNKRA rehabilitation
center, a medical center serving Koreans. President Rhee redesignated the rehabilitation center in 1955,
bringing it under the purview of the national government. Together the Rehabilitation Center and the Rural
Training Center made Tongnae an active site for emergency relief activities and cooperation between
military, government, and voluntary agencies. John B. Coulter to David L. Rolbein, December 5, 1955, Folder
1: UNKRA-Civilian Relief to Korea-Requests for and Offers of Assistance: UN Women’s Guild Donations,
Box 29, S-0526, UN Archives, New York.
foreseeable future, as the ROK army kept expanding in size and operations. The Tongnae center required support that wartime conditions furnished. However, those same conditions got in the way as the Korean Army maintained its presence and militarization after the fighting stopped.

According to Broadfoot, the object of the Rural Training Center was to help homeless girls, to give them “rural training and homemaking arts,” with some additional emphasis on skills for paid jobs. While the fundamental project of the center, skills and leadership training for young women, dovetailed perfectly with overarching YWCA goals, the center found particular meaning in the aftermath of the war. YWCA members who were concerned about teaching women in a changing nation and economy and about unstable family life in the aftermath of the war saw both these problems addressed in the Tongnae Center.

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39 Barbara Broadfoot, “Tongnae YWCA Rural Training Centre,” July 1954, p.1, Folder 3: YWCA—Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy—South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA. Though they did not conceptualize the problem the same way, the AFSC worried about—the military just kept eating up resources.

Figure 11: Tongnae Teen Knits Folder 1: Korea Classes 1950-1970; n.d, Box 1013: Counties, Korea (Classes-Rural Work), Series I: Prints and Negatives, Record Group 9: Photographs, YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA.
YWCA women intended for poor and orphaned teenage girls to learn commercial and farming skills at the Tongnae Rural Training Center. Though American YWCA women saw the project as one of cooperation with Korean YWCA, western YWCA advisors frequently took an imperial posture. Western YWCA women often speculated about the limited capacity of Koreans to thrive without strict guidelines. Advisors assumed that the women at the center needed training to know how to participate in the social and economic lives of their villages, that they needed to be taught household skills—either of which one would presume women could learn by staying home. Of course, the war exacerbated this problem—YWCA women sought to fill the center with young women who had very poor families or who were orphans, and therefore could not learn the center’s skills at home. But the Americans slipped from notions that young women could not learn important life skills at home to notions that young women could not learn important life skills in Korean villages.41

Moreover, the center clearly sought to impart skills with an eye toward a new Korea, one recovering from war, but also rebuilding into a nation amenable to western capitalist influence. In the kinds of skills taught, the center’s objective was training women in a way that essentially maintained power dynamics that kept women in the

41 We might consider the posture of these education programs as Orientalist. As Edward Said conceptualized, Orientalism worked as function of colonial approaches, repackaging existing modes of understanding as though the colonizing power were the only ones qualified to instruct. Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); Christina Klein, Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).
home, but also brought western sensibilities and sympathies into their worldview.

Indeed, the Tongnae Rural Training Center exemplified the challenges at hand in shaping what it meant to be a Korean woman in the 1950s—and for the Western advisors, what it meant to construct a new, international Christian Korean woman.

Through programs at the Center, young Korean women were trained in Christian life and how to spread Christianity in Korea. By 1954, the girls at the Rural Training Center received Bible instruction three mornings per month, monthly “Bible teaching methods,” and more hygiene instruction once per week. Americans assumed that Koreans did not know how to take care of their own health in really basic ways. Part of their training as rural women included developing the ability to teach their peers and future children about Christ’s message. The missionary impulse, in this sense, was reproductive: the center was about giving the women skills to produce more Christians.42

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42Barbara Broadfoot, “Tongnae YWCA Rural Training Centre,” July 1954, p.1, Folder 3: YWCA—Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy—South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA. Maryknoll and AFSC programs in Korea also included personal hygiene lessons. American aid workers assumed that basic health, cleanliness, and reproductive knowledge among Koreans was “primitive,” an assumption compounded by the devastation of the war: lack of infrastructure and stable housing did not promote hygienic living by American or Korean standards. American aid workers, however, tended to attribute poor public health to cultural difference rather than to lack of access to resources. On colonial medicine’s impositions of racial difference, see Warwick Anderson, Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). Women specifically were the targets of medical missionary work. In the late nineteenth century medical expertise in Korea coalesced specifically around women’s health. See Sonja Kim, Imperatives of Care: Women and Medicine in Colonial Korea (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2019).
The animating principles of the Tongnae Center privileged activities designed to build long-term, independent skills. The Anglophone women who ran the center had high hopes that it could both impart lessons for young women to thrive independently; and that the center itself could be self-sustaining in the long run. And yet in 1956, Broadfoot lamented that resources for the center were drying up as relief organizations closed up shop in Korea. The center relied on organizations that were in Korea for war relief. Broadfoot talked of soliciting CWS, CARE, the Save the Children Fund, and UNKRA for sponsorship and help holding on to their site at Tongnae. Furthermore, she wanted to gain access to the nearby U.S. Army camp to form some military ties for help. At the same time, the director realized it would be better to rely on “indigenous help” in the long-run, as international relief agencies were destined to close down shop at some point.43

The challenges of long-term planning for the Rural Training Center encompassed programs as well as operations. Broadfoot offered some speculation about the utility of thinking or talking about “vocational training.” In the director’s mind, none of the skills they taught at the center could realistically be put to much use as a job back home in a Korean village—really the only opportunities for these women were in menial labor. Skills they taught at the center, like agricultural practices, were, to the Broadfoot’s mind,

43 “Tongnae YWCA Rural Training Centre” No.1, January 31, 1956, Folder 3: YWCA—Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy—South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA.
only really useful in being a wife. The potentially more lucrative skills like weaving were taught on expensive machinery which the women would not have access to back home, and thus they had substantial hurdles to the possibility of selling their wares.

What, then, was the purpose of the training? The director offered some vague responses: “This centre is doing an excellent job in giving the girls a good background and a happy life; it is training in leadership and responsibility (clichés again) and turning out good citizens.” When Broadfoot worried about the women’s ability to earn a living, the chairwoman offered that women could “go into a factory or do hairdressing” upon their departure from the center.

Anxieties at play here speak to the complex vision that international YWCA women had for Korea, as well as to Korea’s complex circumstances. First, Broadfoot betrayed hints of her hopes for the women’s aspirations—the training she sought to offer them would ideally be suitable for professional or semi-professional life, but also for marriage. It seems the director did not consider factory or hairdressing work to be

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44 Whatever Broadfoot’s concerns about not giving Korean girls better skillsets, her dismissal of training for marriage was out-of-character for YWCA women: indeed, training for marriage and family life would prove an important feature of YWCA programs as the decade wore on.


46 “Tongnae YWCA Rural Training Centre” No.1, January 31, 1956, p.6 Folder 3: YWCA—Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy—South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA.
suitable for the kind of leadership and professionalization that she expected from the YWCA. She thus aspired to expand training to include clerical and child-care skills in the hopes that women from the center could go on to be secretaries or teachers. Here career prospects were tied up in the survival of the center—Broadfoot observed that women did not want to come to the center just to be trained in back-breaking agricultural labor. She thought if they could train the women in less strenuous, more professionalized skills, there would be incentive for higher demand for the Center’s services. Broadfoot thus reflected a YWCA middle class impulse, even as the Tongnae Center operated in a highly impoverished context. Broadfoot betrayed her favor for more “skilled” and “respectable” employment: if the goal was simply to realistically train Korean women for the jobs available to them, surely skills that would serve them in a factory or salon would be highly valued. Rather, Broadfoot expected women who came to the center to aspire to higher paying, more “professional” jobs. Second, the director’s assessment that there was little to offer by way of useful vocational training stands in stark contrast to other vocational training programs. Most obviously, the FSU Kunsan mission invested heavily in their nurses’ training program, which operated with a fundamental understanding that Korean women could be trained in nursing, and that

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47 Though YWCA women and other reformer women were not opposed to women’s work in factories per se, middle-class reform women had long displayed patronizing attitudes toward women factory workers. Izzo, *Liberal Christianity and Women’s Global Activism*, (2018) 22; Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).
there was a demand for that labor in Korea. The challenge, then, lay in creating a training program that was appealing to Korean participants, useful for the Korean job market, and amenable to YWCA notions of a suitable Christian life.

Observers’ assumptions about gender roles and inherent skills also haunted concerns over staffing YWCA projects like the Rural Training Center. Describing her assistant, a Miss Kim, Broadfoot encapsulated the dynamics between Koreans and international interlocutors. Broadfoot found Kim to be very capable, taking on many responsibilities including interpreting, bookkeeping, house mothering, and serving as interim director. Broadfoot found Kim to be slightly lacking in this last task, however, due to her gender. According to Broadfoot, the men who worked at the Center—and Korean men in general—were not amenable to being supervised by a woman.48 Broadfoot made no mention, however, of the men showing any antipathy to her own leadership. It seems the problem was not that Kim was a woman, but that she was a Korean woman. Either the men took issue with Broadfoot in position of power but were not in a position to let their antipathy show, or they did not have issue with a white Canadian woman in charge. Either way, we see a racial hierarchy playing out in Broadfoot’s analysis: her whiteness insulated her from critique from male Koreans

around her.\textsuperscript{49} In any case, it speaks to her imperial position, as she viewed gender hierarchy among Koreans as a function of cultural and racial mores, and she appears to have not viewed herself within the gender hierarchy of the center.\textsuperscript{50}

Concerns about gender hierarchy aside, the Korean YWCA highly valued the work of the Tongnae Rural Training Center and publicized the center’s programs and its stories of individual achievement. One 1956 report celebrated the potential socially and economically elevating effects of the programs of the Rural Training Center. The report told of two sisters, Kyung Sun and Kyung Whan, who went through training at the Tongnae center, and eventually became well educated enough (including picking up English proficiency) to teach at the center. Kyung Sun married a Korean Army chaplain. The report explains the Kyung’s success stories as being indicative of the center’s power (and the Korean YWCA’s power more broadly) to play “an important part in the

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\textsuperscript{49} This analysis of the gender dynamic at Tongnae comes to us through Broadfoot, and therefore carries her notions about how Korean society operated. We can imagine, however, what Koreans’ thoughts on Broadfoot were: Having endured decades of Japanese imperialism, the men at the rural training center would have been accustomed to a power dynamic where foreigners claimed positions of authority over Korean institutions. Indeed, from Japanese imperialism, the Koreans would have also grown accustomed to the imposition of a racial hierarchy in which compliance with the imposing force was rewarded even as Koreans were positioned as lower in the hierarchy. We must consider the possibility that the men at Tongnae voiced no objections to Broadfoot’s leadership because years of imperial subjectivity had trained them in ways to appease imperial agents for the purposes of ensuring their own positions in society. On racial hierarchy in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, see Takashi Fujitani, Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during World War II (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

\textsuperscript{50} Barbara Broadfoot, “Tongnae YWCA Rural Training Centre,” July 1954, p.1, Folder 3: YWCA—Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy—South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA.
training of Korea’s future wives, mothers, and leaders.”\textsuperscript{51} This is very telling of the YWCA’s priorities. It emphasized skills, and money-making skills at that. The Association also found upholding family structures and family life to be of vital importance. It saw stories like Kyung Sun’s as an accomplishment in the center’s capacity to create capable wives and mothers.\textsuperscript{52}

Though one small part of a broader Korean YWCA program, the Tongnae Rural Training Center connects many threads of YWCA and humanitarian activities in the 1950s. It relied on a fusion of local and international organizing and in that fusion displayed how “western” interveners held a prominent place in recovery activities. This place gave those interveners a platform from which to exert their power and to dictate the terms of conversations about what Korea would look like going forward. It also gave those interveners the platform and the content from which to speak to the international community—most prominently the U.S.—about Korea. The Rural Training Center showcased the complex impressions that Anglophone women held about the Korean women for and with whom they worked: Even when American women talked positively of Koreans they tended to do so in generalizing ways that pathologized and

\textsuperscript{51} “On their Own—But Not Alone,” 1956, Folder 3: YWCA—Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy—South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

\textsuperscript{52} “On their Own—But Not Alone,” 1956, Folder 3: YWCA—Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy—South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA.
racialized Korean behaviors, making generalizations like “Koreans are hard workers.” Those generalizations also operated to depict Koreans in negative ways, as backward thinking, lacking in leadership capacity, or “not ready” for self-governance. The imperial relationship international YWCA women had to locals exacerbated and mobilized these impressions.53

The programs at the Tongnae Rural Training Center illuminate YWCA values in this era: Korean and International women alike sought some degree of independence for Korean women, but they still expected being a Christian wife and mother to take highest priority. Indeed, they associated a woman’s capacity to be a good wife and mother with her security, positioning secure marriage as protective of her liberation. Thus programs at Tongnae tried to give young women skills for married life in a village. The YWCA in Korea in this period also valued participation in growing capitalist democracy amenable to the U.S.—thus the Center also sought to endow women with skills to use for paid labor. Finally, the Tongnae Rural Training Center demonstrates the slippage between

53 Regarding the imperial logic of training a nation to be more competent, civilized, or prepared for self-determination, see Naoko Shibusawa, America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); John Dower, Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999). Dower and Shibusawa both interrogate how the American occupation of Japan functioned by using hard and soft power to create a Japanese state amenable to American Cold War aims. Shibusawa especially shows how during the occupation period, Americans rehabilitated Japan’s image by mobilizing a logic that the nation and its culture had to be trained to function in a post-war world order. Though imperial agents (of all varieties) in Korea utilized much the same “civilizing” logic, it was in the context of capturing American attention for a nation for which most Americans had little attention, as opposed to Japan, for which many Americans had intense antipathy.
relief and recovery programs, as the same ethos of saving vulnerable populations dispossessed by the war bled into long-standing programs.

As Korea recovered from years of war, the YWCA sought to make Korean women into active participants in a new post-war nation. Part of this program focused on job training for women to work outside the home. Another important component was politics. The YWCA kept its finger on the pulse of reforms in 1950s policies, and worked to shape Korean women into civic participants. The YWCA in Korea was thus apt to comment on policy changes, keep its members educated on contemporary issues, and showcase the YWCA’s position in respect to reforms to the international community.

The YWCA found that the changing national and political landscape in Korea heralded new circumstances for Korean women. As such, the YWCA in Korea sought to implement a series of educational and training programs tailored at preparing women for political participation but also to “strengthen family life.” Priorities included education for citizenship and democracy; “understanding of women’s status and the responsibility which comes with new status”; vocational programs; community service and cooperation; “family life,” including understanding “the men who return from Army life”, child care, and marriage; and “international living,” including the UN and
the world fellowship program of the YWCA, cultural exchange, and international affairs.\textsuperscript{54}

The YWCA mobilized around specific political concerns by supporting legal services for Korean women. In 1955 the National Association set studying and mobilizing around Korean family law as priority for the YWCA.\textsuperscript{55} By 1958 it instituted a systematic legal aid program which focused on political access and family law. Finding that Korean women had inadequate recourse for cruel treatment—Park had noted that Korean civil law concerning family, inheritance, and adoption “[discriminated] against women and girls”\textsuperscript{56}—the Legal Aid Center set out to provide pro bono help to women. Framing Korean women as “shy” and ignorant of procedures that might protect them from abandonment or other “cruel” treatment, the YWCA positioned the Legal Aid center a step toward bringing women into the nation by giving them tools and access in the legal system. The YWCA showed an interest in specific measures for creating access

\textsuperscript{54} Korea Report Jan 1, 1958-Jan 1, 1959, p. 3, Folder 3: YWCA—Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy—South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

\textsuperscript{55} Esther Park, “Report for 1956,” Folder 3: YWCA—Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy—South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

and opportunities for Korean women. They also supported lofty career aspirations for Korean women, celebrating the attorney who ran the legal aid center, a member of the YWCA National Board and Chairwoman of the National Public Affairs Committee. Her role demonstrated that Korean women could not only access the Korean legal system, but be part of it, an essential component in the YWCA’s vision for expanding economic and social roles for Korean women.  

The YWCA goals surrounding building strong family life among Koreans led to programs focused on marriage and family law—and specifically on preserving women’s marriages from straying spouses. In 1958 the National Public Affairs Committee sponsored a “check your marriage registration” campaign. Through the Legal Aid Center, it came to the attention of national YWCA leaders that “some women are losing their husbands to other women because their marriages were not properly registered, even after being married for over 30 years. Many women do not know whether or not their marriages have been registered.” The National YWCA designated April 1959


“Check Your Registration Month” to encourage Korean women to verify that their marriages were properly licensed and documented with the national government.59

The narrative that the 1958-59 annual report spun regarding marriage registration phrased the problem oddly. Claiming that Korean wives were “losing” their husbands to other women obfuscated men’s agency in this problem—it is not as though Korean men had amnesia and opportunistic women swept in and said, “I’m your wife.”60 The more likely tale is that absent a central bureaucracy for licensing marriages and granting divorces, Korean men found it relatively easy—at least legally—to leave their wives and children. By pushing proper marriage registration, the YWCA sought to give Korean women some legal recourse against abandonment. This sort of legal recourse, if not particularly rosy in how it understood married life, at least sought some measure of protection for women. In campaigning to have marriages legally registered, and thus not too easily exited, the YWCA sought to underwrite the simplest path to stability available to most Korean women—marriage. With this registration program, even if a marriage did end, Korean women would have the documentation necessary to


60 What did the YWCA gain by phrasing the problem this way? I can’t be completely sure, but perhaps the National Association was hesitant to blame the issue on Korean men leaving their wives. I also speculate that this problem was really exacerbated by the war, which created a gender disparity in the Korean population, and by years of Japanese colonialism, followed by World War II, followed by American Occupation, followed by the formation of a Korean National Government—creating an instability in centralized bureaucratic record keeping.
fight for some legal and/or financial protection for themselves and their children. The Korean YWCA thus underwrote family stability by striving to make marriages more difficult for men to exit.\textsuperscript{61}

Seeking to promote family stability not only through law, the Association also sponsored measures to promote affection and stability within families. The YWCA sponsored a “family recreation” program, whereby an instructor taught women games and activities to do at home with the family. The hope was that activities would allow for the whole family to do things together, specifically so the adult men would not “go out for their recreation.”\textsuperscript{62} This in conjunction with the “check your marriage registration” program speaks to the YWCA’s priorities—they were concerned with investing in and protecting a nuclear family: legally and culturally. Based on both these

\textsuperscript{61} The Women’s Enlightenment Movement, a group of women’s organizations seeking common-sense training for women touched on this issue in 1960. Calling an organizational meeting sponsored by the YWCA, the Enlightenment movement pinpointed bigamy as a vital issue degrading family life in Korea. The literature called on women to do their part by not being concubines and not voting for bigamists—apparently an issue rampant enough in 1960 to raise concern among women’s groups. “The Women’s Enlightenment Movement,” 1960, Folder 3: YWCA—Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy—South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

\textsuperscript{62} The report says no more about this but I speculate that this is coded language about men engaging in vice activities outside the home—unsavory or at least contrary to the YWCA vision for Christian nuclear family. Korea Report Jan 1, 1958-Jan 1, 1959, p. 3, Folder 3: YWCA—Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy—South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA.
programs it also seems that the YWCA was worried that men’s activities left women vulnerable. And they designed programs to address this vulnerability.\(^{63}\)

Through projects like the Legal Aid Center, the YWCA in Korea addressed the emergency of the moment while seeking to instill and strengthen particular political and cultural values. With legal aid, the Association met specific problems exacerbated—if not created—by the war: a lack of bureaucratic and population stability that made the maintenance of family life more difficult for Korean women, which in turn undermined women’s political and economic position.\(^{64}\) In addressing that problem, the YWCA of Korea encouraged Korean women to hold tight and fight for a stable home—with legal action, if necessary.

The YWCA’s political education programs were well-reflected in one priority from the 1956-57 annual report: a “program of training women and girls for democratic


\(^{64}\) Of course, women could find abuse and precarity within a marriage. But Christian missionaries had campaigned to reform the institution in the early twentieth century, trying to eradicate Korean practices like young marriage and men entreating women to be concubines, to uphold ideals of Christian, western marriages: one Christian woman and one Christian man joined by love and choice in the pursuit of creating a Christian family. Thus the YWCA sought moral as well as economic security through marriage: A Korean man should not be able to leave his wife having to take care of his children; and a liberal Christian family should be preserved for the spiritual edification of all family members. For more on the transformation of ideas about marriage in early 20\(^{th}\) century Korea, see Hyaeweol Choi, “Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea” (2009); Theodore Jun Yoo, the “The ‘New Woman’ and the Politics of Love, Marriage, and Divorce in Colonial Korea” Gender and History 17 no. 2 (August 2005).
living.”  

It also shows the understanding of a particular perspective on progress—a view that before there were bad times, and that now Korea had moved on to better, rebuilding times. This in itself took some reframing of recent histories and discourses: coming off the armistice in Summer 1953, Americans and Koreans alike expressed dismay at a sense of incomplete closure from the war. Rhee especially thought the armistice would not hold, and fought for continued militarization and American military support in Korea. In order for the YWCA to claim that Korea was entering a new and stable era, they had to set aside apprehension about the incomplete peace, and embrace a narrative that this Korea was a whole, modern, forward-looking one. This itself took careful balance—at the same time the YWCA acknowledged communist threats surrounding the Republic of Korea. The very notion that Korean women were ready to start stepping into a new position in a new Korea clashed with anxieties still present in YWCA documents about the instability of South Korea. In its political education program, the Korean YWCA tried to build the plane while flying it: preparing

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66 Syngman Rhee, “Text of the Address Delivered by Dr. Syngman Rhee, President of the Republic of Korea, At a Dinner Given in His Honor By the American-Korean Foundation,” New York, August 2, 1954, Korea Reports and Correspondence Aug.-Dec. 1954, Korea Correspondence and Reports June 1953-1959 (Box 5), YMCA International Work in Korea, Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota Archives and Special Collections, Minneapolis.
Korean women for an internationalist democratic nation while trying to will that internationalist democracy into existence.

This would prove an uphill battle on multiple fronts. President Rhee’s desire for unilateral action was not conducive to either internationalism or democratic participation. And opportunities and rights for women and their political and economic independence were slow-developing. On the one hand, there were expanded opportunities for women’s political participation, including women in federal positions. On the other hand, by 1960 anti-communist crackdowns resulted in antidemocratic policies: 1958’s National Security Law, ostensibly aimed at Communists, threatened restrictions on freedom of speech, press, and assembly. The Korean YWCA expressed only mild concern over this reduction in political freedom.

But the YWCA also observed some political developments which expanded political opportunities for Korean women, movement on which they hoped to capitalize by expanding women’s political participation. Passage of the Revised Civil Laws, which


were to go into effect in January 1960, offered substantially expanded legal and political rights to Korean women. Candidates for national assembly ran on some feminist issues, at least on the codification of women’s rights, and three women were elected to the National Assembly—one of whom was a member of the Korean National YWCA board.70

Rhee’s alarming moves further toward totalitarianism aside, at the end of the 1950s, the YWCA saw great potential in the political future of Korean women. The Association evaluated political change toward the end of the decade as a net good for its constituency. Though the association would sometimes express frustration that Korean women were inadequately educated to vote “the right way,” they saw enormous potential in building educational programs that would get Korean women involved in political life.71 What that analysis failed to see was a marked decline in democratic policy in Korea. Rhee grew more and more authoritarian in the waning days of his presidency at the end of the decade. In 1960, having amended the constitution to exempt himself from term limits, Rhee ran for reelection unopposed after his opponent died a month before the election. The vice-presidential contest, however, was still on, and


Rhee’s ally Lee Ki-bung won amidst wide-spread allegations that the vote had been rigged. The allegations led to a country-wide protest that resulted in Rhee’s ouster. After these short-lived pro-democracy uprisings, the regime of Park Chung Hee from 1962 - 1979 was founded on less-than-democratic procedures. While the South Korean constitution called for universal suffrage, in place through the 1960s, Park Chung Hee instituted policies that limited political discourse in South Korea, and more severe ones that functionally halted the democratic process in the 1970s.\(^\text{72}\) Nonetheless the YWCA staked out its place as an important institution for shaping Korean women’s political participation. The YWCA is now considered an important feminist institution in Korea, credited with fighting for advances in family law beneficial to women—finally a salve for that cruel treatment Esther Park identified in 1956.\(^\text{73}\) From supporting rebuilding institutions to offering political education, emergency relief measures operated as a gateway into these broader political moves.

As the decade wore on, international interveners in the Korean YWCA sought to strengthen the stability of that organization. They did this through seeking to secure the


financial future of the Korean YWCA. Doing so, however, had it challenges, as continuing instability in Korea made it difficult for the YWCA to consistently gather resources. Thus to international observers, the messaging surrounding the Korean YWCA fluctuated between assuring the international community that the organization would soon be independent; and requesting ongoing financial, logistical, and personnel support.

The Korean YWCA held overseas training in high regard, finding it necessary to develop promising Korean women into lasting and proficient YWCA staff. In a 1956 report on the Korean YWCA, observers noted that the Association “[relied] heavily on the outstanding staff work being done by five young Korean Women who have returned to the YWCA jobs, after training in the U.S.A. in the Foreign Division’s International Leadership Training Project.” The report found that properly trained leadership was one of the scarcest resources “in this war-scarred country.” Despite their words about Korean women’s expanding capacity and gumption, YWCA leadership in Korea and the U.S. found that adequate training to permanently build up the organization could only be had outside Korea. In 1957 Maria Pak Lee requested additional support from Geneva for an expanded international training program, going so far as to recommend specific positions that required training abroad (ideally in the U.S. or Canada, with Australia

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74 “Korea” 1956, Folder 3: YWCA—Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy—South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA.
and New Zealand as backups). For the most part, Lee sought training for high-ranking leadership positions: Associate national student secretary; health education secretary; Seoul YWCA building director; Seoul YWCA general secretary; National YWCA general secretary. Though the positions requiring additional training were mostly in high-up administration, they also addressed Korea’s postwar environment—most glaringly, the organization required someone to get the proper training to oversee projects building and rebuilding the YWCA’s physical spaces.

The Korean YWCA leaned on foreign Anglophone advisors to run things. In addition to training abroad, Lee asked for personnel support in Korea. She requested a foreign staff person for Seoul for “at least a five year period” –they needed someone to oversee the building project, and then oversee programs in the new building, and to “[run] the building to serve the community more effectively.” For the long term, the Korean YWCA needed staff trained in order to return to Korea as experts. To address their immediate situation, Lee required staff from abroad already trained to address the YWCA’s infrastructure problems.

Maria Pak Lee to Janet Thomson, October 30, 1957, Folder 3: YWCA — Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy — South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

Maria Pak Lee to Janet Thomson, October 30, 1957, Folder 3: YWCA — Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy — South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA.
The 1957 request for training abroad emerged from decades of precedent. One of the founders of the YWCA, Helen Kim, received her education in the U.S. Kim, at the encouragement of missionary teachers sought her advanced education in the United States. Kim earned her B.A. from Ohio Wesleyan in 1924; her M.A. from Boston University in 1925; and PhD from Columbia in 1931. With her American education Kim catapulted to educational and social leadership positions back home in Korea. Closer at hand, Barbara Broadfoot of the Tongnae Rural Training Center sought training for assistant, Miss Kim. Broadfoot in 1956 recommended that Kim would still be too young (by Korean standards of demeanor and gender) to run the center upon her return, but should nonetheless still get to do a two-year tour, as she would be a good ambassador to Korea, and “she has earned it over and over again.” Though Kim continually faced the same concerns (coming from Anglophone YWCA advisors) over whether she could be respected in a leadership position, the organization still valued training. Throughout the decade, American and Canadian YWCA women reported that such training abroad

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77 This sort of arrangement was not specific to women—Syngman Rhee received degrees from George Washington University, Harvard, and Princeton. But because there were so few post-secondary education opportunities for women in Korea through the 1950s, education and training in the U.S. had particularly high value. These international educational arrangements also tended to be tied up with missionary networks: Kim “was fostered by American missionaries throughout her education and career,” according to Choi. Hyaewool Choi, Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea, 149-150.

78 Kim founded the Korea Times; was president of Ewha Woman’s University, and was the director of the Office of Public Information during Rhee’s presidency.

79 “Tongnae YWCA Rural Training Centre” No.1, January 31, 1956, p.6 Folder 3: YWCA—Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy—South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA.
schemes were useful and indeed necessary for educating a self-sufficient organizational leadership. And furthermore, as with Miss Kim’s case, training abroad could serve as incentive and reward for particularly hard-working or dedicated YWCA women, or as a form of soft diplomacy as talented and polite young women represented Korea abroad. Training abroad was generally for highly-placed staff, though as with Barbara Broadfoot’s assistant, placements were often based on high-ranking staff or advisors perceiving some potential in their employees. The basic notion behind the training was that it could end its own necessity—if enough Korean women were trained abroad, they could come home and teach more Koreans how to run the YWCA properly.

From training targeted potential leaders in the U.S., the Korean YWCA moved to having American-trained Korean women instruct Korean women locally with the intention of eventually moving away from expensive and intensive reliance on American training. In 1958-1959 the National YWCA conducted a staff training program that gave intensive one-year training to nine Korean women from different local units, with the hopes of placing them as program secretaries. These nine women were trained in Korea. The training secretary, Soon Yang Park, was trained in the U.S. This speaks to the underlying reproductive logic of training and educational initiatives—one woman trained in the U.S. could come back to Korea and teach nine women to efficiently run their organizations. The commentary on how well the program was going came from
Esther Park, which speaks to a problem in that logic of reproduction: there was still a good deal of American oversight.\textsuperscript{80}

In addition to reliance on Western women for training staff, the Korean YWCA also required ongoing financial support. Support was not hard to find and drew out the close relationship between the Korean and foreign YWCAs. But relying on foreign support—for staff training and for financial assistance—undermined the Korean Association’s stated goals to work independently. Lee asked Geneva for $10,000 to supplement the 1958 budget. In 1955 the YWCA of Korea had expressed an intention to be financially independent by 1957. Clearly that did not pan out. Financial independence was not available in the landscape the organization faced in 1957. Lee pinned this on two conditions very hard to control: economic instability (both generally in regards to the functioning of the economy, and specifically in the instability of the hwan); and a lack of understanding among Korean people of the need to support YWCA activities.\textsuperscript{81}

YWCA leadership attempted to create consistent and non-extraordinary programs as the 1950s progressed. They faced the same hurdles over and over again as a failure to find stability in Korea increased demands on the YWCA and stretched its

\textsuperscript{80} “Korea” 1959, p. 21 Folder 3: YWCA—Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy—South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

\textsuperscript{81} Maria Pak Lee to Janet Thomson, October 30, 1957, Folder 3: YWCA—Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy—South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA.
resources.\footnote{As I note in the essay on the course of the war and Chapter One, stability in Korea was elusive, a problem that dogged relief and development programs everywhere.} The 1955 World YWCA Handbook described Korea as a transforming nation, for better and worse: “The changing political situation, fluctuation of the economy, and rapid social changes which are the aftermath of the war, have had a great effect on the programme of the YWCA.”\footnote{“Korea,” \textit{World YWCA Handbook 1955}, January 23, 1956, Folder 3: YWCA — Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy — South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA.} Programs in education and vocational training, as well as ones designated as “emergency work,” like milk stations, aid to orphans, and resources for unsheltered and displaced people, all addressed a nation changing not only in the aftermath of a war, but also at the end of long decades of colonial rule. The end of the war thus presented to the YWCA both challenges of giving people much needed resources, and opportunities to shape particular women’s place in the reconstructing nation.\footnote{The 1955 \textit{Handbook} also emphasized that the Korean YWCA was a long way from being sustainable based solely on local support. The report emphasized the vital importance of World YWCA support for the Korean YWCA both to enable the National Association’s programs, and to embed the YWCA in Korea in a lasting way.}

As of the end of 1958, a report on the Korean YWCA triumphantly described the organization’s robust programs. The programs included expanded Y-Teen club work; educational endeavors for children, teens, and adults; and ongoing support for the Widows’ Project. “All these emphases are in addition to the regular program of classes
and activities for women and girls and the continuing relief work for war refugees.” At the end of 1958, war relief was “continuing.” Whatever the YWCA’s efforts to return to “normal” there was still a demand for relief work, and it still fell under YWCA purview. Furthermore, though the report set war relief aside from both regular and extraordinary programming, other programs also addressed issues exacerbated—if not caused—by the war. The “widows project” initially started as a measure to serve women widowed by the war. In 1958 those women still faced financial precarity and few resources. Likewise, educational programs addressed lack of access to school and well as intense poverty that prompted children to seek employment in the hours they might otherwise be in school. Both the problems here—poverty and a lack of a robust school system—were problems that existed before the war but were made worse by it. Once more we see that relief and development projects bled into each other: regular programs addressed extraordinary circumstances, and extraordinary programs carried on long enough to become a regular feature of YWCA activities. It thus proved to be a challenge for the YWCA—and all of Korea—to leave behind its status as a war-torn country.

85 “Korea” 1959, p. 21, Folder 3: YWCA—Korea, Box 323: Scrapbooks, Italy— South Africa, Series VI: Countries & Regions, Record Group 5: International Work, YWCA of the USA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Special Collections, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

86 Indeed, David Ekbladh claims that successful development in Korea is only visible in a long view—not becoming entirely visible until the 80s. The status of Korea as war-torn, and as an object of war relief faded by the early 60s when a military coup pushed Rhee from office. Where relief and development programs of humanitarian issues were concerned, organizations slowly melded their extraordinary (war-time) programs and their “regular” ones—as this story of the YWCA shows. David Ekbladh, ““The Proving Ground”: 312
As with other organizations concerned with humanitarian relief in Korea, the YWCA’s experience reflected the ways that the Korean War shaped Korean intuitions long after July 1953. It showcases the fundamental paradox of humanitarianism: the caring work takes place because of devastation. The war made it exceedingly difficult for the YWCA of Korea to operate at the same time that it gave the Association the tools and context to become an influential Korean institution. By the admission of YWCA leadership, the war was especially devastating for Korean women, but it gave Korean women new opportunities as the economy and politics reformed. And the war gave the YWCA the means to exploit these new opportunities to expand their services and their base.

A 1961 article in *World YWCA Monthly* triumphantly reported on how far the Korean YWCA had come. The article celebrated that, no longer mired wartime refugee-oriented activities, the Association had been able to shift its focus toward leadership and job training, economic services, child welfare, and citizenship education. 87 This report was intended to show how robust YWCA programs had grown. Distinguishing between


wartime emergency activities, and more stable development and leadership programs, the World YWCA Monthly blurb explained the Korean YWCA as a matured organization, back to normal after substantial upheaval. As we have seen, the reality was more complex. In the intervening decade between the war and 1961, the Korean YWCA did not drop emergency programs in favor of regular projects. Rather, the line between the two blurred to build programs that addressed the specific postwar instabilities of 1950s Korea. The programs that the Korean YWCA boasted in 1961 were as much a product of meeting the needs of a population and land devastated by the war as they were of the deliberate development-minded projects of the Association. Moreover, the Korean YWCA developed these projects with substantial support, influence, and oversight from international observers, funders, and tutors. The Korean YWCA received substantial support and input from its American counterpart. And American interest in Korea and support for the Korean YWCA existed in the 50s as a function of the war and the U.S.’s larger imperial investment in Korea. The Korean YWCA’s robust program of 1961, despite its framing as having shaken off the vestiges of war, in fact existed because of the war. The war was inextricably imbedded in the character of the Korean YWCA and that organization’s influence in Korea.

Americans exercised influence in Korea in a somewhat roundabout way through the YWCA. Perhaps better than any other case study, the YWCA shows us how contested American power was—ironically, considering the actors at play here had little to say by way of critique of the U.S. But the YWCA was a project whose borders were blurry: despite constant intervention and oversight from American advisors—Esther Park, an American citizen, remained on as advisor to the Korean YWCA until 1977—Koreans had considerable say. Nonetheless, the organization was heavily inflected with the values of the American Association and a deep Christian missionary past— the Korean YWCA was pro-capitalist, pro-democracy, and of course, Christian. But we can also view the Korean YWCA from another angle. The Association was able to extract labor and funds from the American YWCA over and over for a decade, while still maintaining some control over its priorities and future. At times the Korean YWCA was able to extract resources from the American military, and from the U.S.-backed UNKRA. Even so, the Association was able to retain its identity as a distinctly Korean institution, and an influential one at that.

In this space of international cooperation and influence, the Korean YWCA sought to shape a narrative of what it meant to be a successful Korean woman. This new

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89 In a sense—it’s not novel to claim that Cold War activities predicated on “advancing democracy” were at times distinctly undemocratic. The Association’s lack of condemnation for Rhee’s repressive policies in the name of quashing Communism is a good example of this. The YWCAs of Korea and the U.S. nonetheless considered themselves to be pro-democracy organizations.
woman was a combination of ideals, and existed in the context of a rebuilding state. In both her ideology and the context in which she lived, this new Korean woman was only possible because of the upheaval of, and relief and rehabilitation from, the Korean War. Of course, some Korean women already embodied these ideals: Helen Kim and Esther Park, both born in Korea and educated in the U.S., and both instrumental in Korean YWCA history, met ideals of education, piety, professionalism, and non-militant Korean nationalism. But the efforts sought to expand the number of women that fit into their categories of success. Furthermore, they sought to create new Korean women even among those who were of lower economic status, and who had substantially less exposure to American culture and education. Kim and Park also failed to live up to the idealized Korean woman in that neither married or had children. In 1956 Ruth Borden celebrated Korean women’s growing interest in building professional careers and partaking civic engagement, but also in “family life, boy and girl relations, and cooking.” 90 Part of the vision that the YWCA espoused was women who could be pious and competent and civically engaged, and also be mothers and wives.

Conclusion: Caring for Empire from Korea to Vietnam and Afghanistan

Howard Rusk, the former chairman of the American Korean Foundation, was a highly regarded physician. His concern for Korea came from his overall commitment to rehabilitative medicine. In 1948, Rusk had founded the Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at New York University, which later came to bear his name. Its mission was to address “what happens to severely disabled people after the stitches are out and the fever is down.”¹ Rusk mapped his attention to long-term healing onto Korea, a space where broken and battered physical bodies and a ravaged country required the kind of attentive care the doctor valued. For four years from 1954 to 1958, Rusk leveraged his medical expertise and social standing to ask Americans to care about Korea.

But it was after the wake of the Korean war that Rusk’s career reached new heights. In the 1960s, the First Lady of the exiled Republic of China, Soong Mei-ling, personally asked the physician to develop medical programs in Taiwan. Rusk also tended to such high-profile patients as professional athletes, a supreme court justice, and President John F. Kennedy.²

² Ibid.
Banking on Rusk’s medical mission expertise, especially in East Asia, President Lyndon B. Johnson sent the physician to tour hospitals in Vietnam in 1967. Rusk’s task was to coordinate a relief mission among American-allied South Vietnamese civilians. Rusk surveyed hospitals to assess the damage napalm had done. He found that the incendiary chemical had “caused only a negligible number of civilian casualties,” asserting that “the picture that has been painted by some of large numbers of children burned by napalm in Vietnam is grossly exaggerated.”

Ostensibly sent to gauge the needs of Vietnamese civilians, Rusk used his hospital survey as a way to frame U.S. policy in Southeast Asia in a positive light. In one report to the New York Times, Rusk contrasted his claim that he had seen no instances of civilians burned by napalm in twenty hospitals with a laundry list of alleged Vietcong atrocities. Rusk heightened the contrast by pointing to American doctors as the caregivers for injured South Vietnamese civilians. Much like publicity about Korea in the previous decade, the article pinned civilian suffering on communist aggression. Amidst a substantially louder outcry against this war than Korea had ever seen, the doctor recycled Korean War language. Rebuking antiwar activism that criticized American imperialism, Rusk asserted that it was Americans who cared for Vietnamese civilians.

Finding the situation dire, with mass casualties and overcrowded hospitals, Rusk asked

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3 Ibid.
the American people to chip in: “We can supply whatever it takes to provide the services necessary to heal the wounds, however inflicted.”

Cold War strategies of drawing U.S. citizens’ attention away from their government’s militarism and toward protective and caring American gestures, born in Korea, lived again in Vietnam.

In these chapters, I have explored how many Americans engaged Korea in the 1950s. It is not that Americans ignored Korea, but rather that paying attention to the war and its toll was a decentralized and voluntary action. Americans showed support for South Koreans through gestures that centered the war’s destruction while eliding how American power contributed to it. In so doing, Americans turned their attention from the grave investments the war required: the military build-up, the legal arrangements that allowed for sidestepping formal declarations of war, and the cost in human lives.

Americans mobilized around imagery of suffering good Koreans. They framed caring for Korea as a matter of helping Christians, as protecting an ally from communism when anticolonial movements in Asia challenged the logic of Western capitalist domination. U.S. care for Koreans, though expressing genuine concern for Koreans’ plight, was steeped in paternalistic and racist understandings of Koreans’

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capacity to govern and take care of themselves. Still, Americans’ understandings of Korea, flawed though they may have been, prompted long-term investment in institutions like the Maryknoll Hospital and the YWCA of Korea, significant for their medical service in Busan and their place in South Korean feminist movements, respectively.

But however voluntary Americans’ relief efforts were, however “soft” in the language of the era’s masculinist diplomats, they enabled hard state power by carrying the responsibility for keeping civilians safe and homefront audiences assured of the essential goodness of their nation’s interventions abroad. Further, these humanitarian efforts freed up UN and South Korean resources for military action and Cold War industrialization. Development was a key selling point of American Cold War policy, predicated in the Marshall Plan model, which saw fostering economic growth as a means to win allies and to shape overseas markets in image of the United States. In Korea and elsewhere around the world, development plans could not proceed without programs that addressed the damage of recent wars, environmental disasters, and displacement of people. The technical assistance that the U.S. valued could get under way without building a population and environment stable enough for people to participate in such programs.\(^5\) Korea’s emergence as an economic power in ensuing

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decades could not have occurred if not for voluntary aid workers sheltering, healing, housing, and educating Korea’s civilian populations.

Each case study in “Caring for Korea” shows a significant contribution that caring for Korea made to Cold War empire and war going forward.

The Maryknoll Sisters’ mission speaks to the religious dimension of the Cold War. It shows a logic of international service based in both broad and specific religious thought. Broadly, the Maryknoll Sisters provided service in the face of what they understood as aggression from Godless communists. Specifically, the Sisters provided medical and human care as mandated by Maryknoll philosophy and the papal encyclical on the Mystical Body of Christ. Through the Maryknoll Sisters we also see both formal and informal partnerships between state and religious institutions, as GIs around Pusan offered a wide range of support to the sisters, sometimes specifically stemming from awe of the Sisters’ faith-fueled service.


* On the militarized economy, see Moon, Militarized Modernity and Gendered Citizenship in South Korea. Moon argues that starting in the 1960s, Korean policy makers used anticommunism as a tool to build the economy. The Korean population went to work under the auspices of military service, but labored in factories and industries which drove Korea’s economy.
The American Friends Service Committee’s experience in Korea offers a different perspective; albeit also rooted in faith, its work highlights the nature of and strictures on dissent from American empire. While having access to and utilizing the resources of the U.S. imperial presence, the AFSC from the start of the Korean War raised concerns about the American position in Korea. Nonetheless, AFSC staff partnered with the military to do their work, placing the urgency of Koreans’ needs above their objections to American foreign policy. Ultimately, the Quakers in Kunsan found their concerns about the U.S.’s imperial moves and the ROK’s militarization to outweigh, and at times work against, their capacity to care for the civilian population of Kunsan. Quakers saw clearly—and stated plainly—that their relief work enabled the kinds of hard power to which they objected. The Friends came out of Kunsan questioning not only the tactics of the U.S. approach to fighting communism, and the militarist zeal of South Korea, but also the ethics of their own foreign service programs in warzones. Later, in Vietnam the AFSC acted on these concerns, taking a much harder line against American policy.

Indeed, the Kunsan Mission had an immediate afterlife in Vietnam. Some AFSC officials who worked in the FSU project ended up in Vietnam in the following decade. Louis Schneider, who wrote the searing analysis of the problems of maintaining a mission in South Korea, ran AFSC operations in Southeast Asia from the 1950s until he
became AFSC Executive Secretary in 1974. AFSC officials learned from their Korea experience and took much bolder stances in Vietnam. The Committee criticized the Vietnam War more forthrightly than it ever had the Korean War. AFSC missions to Vietnam took vastly different shape than those in South Korea, though the basic premise of the missions was similar. Mary and David Stickney set up a medical clinic in Quang Ngai Province in 1966 that focused on serving the region’s huge influx of refugees. The clinic even specialized in prosthetic limbs, just as the Kunsan mission had developed a prosthetic limb workshop. But the mission did not operate through a UN or U.S. aid infrastructure. The Stickneys declined the standard protection for the clinic from the U.S. military. More strikingly, the AFSC also sought to set up a mission in North Vietnam. When the U.S. government refused its request to send aid there, AFSC activists proceeded anyway. Friends formed a splinter group from the AFSC, and defied the State and Treasury departments to funnel funds for the mission through Canada. The Vietnam story shows the lessons learned in Korea: there was only so much the AFSC could do while cooperating with the American imperial apparatus, which limited the


degree to which they could separate themselves from imperialism and political repression. After Korea, they chose to work apart from it.⁹

AFSC activities set the tone—or at least displayed the possibility—of antiwar humanitarianism based not only on an ethos of peace, as in World War II, when the Quakers objected to war but supported the U.S. against Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany, but also in specific objections to American empire and war making. In both Korea and Vietnam, the AFSC spoke out against what they saw as unjust, imperial, racist, and of course violent, actions against the people of those nations. In Vietnam, the Quakers were part of a growing chorus protesting American policy. But they also found a rockier road as they sought ways to serve both sides of the war by circumventing American policies.

AFSC experience in South Korea taught Friends about the limits of cooperation with American empire; that sparked outright rejection of U.S. policy and some civil disobedience in Vietnam in the following decade. But that history also engendered in the AFSC the capacity to at once critique and cooperate, which they carry in their mission to North Korea to this day.

When AFSC leadership began to dismantle the FSU mission, there was some talk about the possibility of setting up a program in North Korea.¹⁰ Such a mission did

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not materialize in the late 1950s, but a Quaker mission to DPRK began in 1980 and endures today. The short and in some ways unsuccessful mission to Kunsan set a stage for Quaker concern about Korea that allowed for truly radical moves in later decades—the AFSC mission to DPRK that still operates despite ongoing tensions with the U.S. and the very restricted presence of Americans in North Korea. It took decades, but in building long-term institutions in North Korea, the AFSC saw the chestnuts that Louis Schneider wrote of in 1954 ripen.

The YWCA’s activities in the 1950s show how that Americans exercised indirect and long-term influence on Korean institutions. By shaping the Korean YWCA through financial and personnel support, Americans guided the Association’s capacity to build programs, and the goals and mechanics of those programs. At Tongnae, for example, Barbara Broadfoot, in consultation with the American and Canadian YWCAs, set the training priorities for the local girls and selected local women to serve in leadership positions. This example also shows how the tumult of war created opportunities for American interlocutors to impose values such as the Association’s brand of liberal Christian women’s empowerment. In Korea those values took hold over the ensuing


decades, as the country amended its family law in favor of women in the twenty-first century. Now the Korean YWCA focuses on accessible child care provision and supporting North Korean women and children. They still give out powdered milk.¹²

Together these case studies show us a proliferation of ways that Americans exercised soft power in Cold War Korea and its aftermath, using service, care, empathy, and political education. But these stories also suggest limits to that power. They show how Korean actors in such institutions captured American resources to use toward their own aims, or else rejected the logic of American war making, signaling incomplete hegemony.

Still, the Korean War shaped homefront American attitudes about warfare and care in ways that stretched beyond the end of the Cold War. Some soft power strategies were recycled in Vietnam, as Howard Rusk’s 1967 apologetics show. That conflict multiplied the possibilities of protest against U.S. imperial policy and produced lasting ruptures in American politics. But Korea was arguably more indicative of things to come. After Vietnam, antiwar activism never reached those heights again. That is not to say that Americans no longer object to war, but that their objections do not have the same drama or power that they had in the 1960s and 70s.¹³ Since that time, the U.S. has


¹³ On the history of peace activism, see Petra Goedde, The Politics of Peace: A Global Cold War History (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019). Some historians have argued that the introduction of the All-Volunteer Force in 1973 slackened the intensity of anti-war sentiment in the U.S. Without the draft drawing
intervened in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, the Congo, Iran, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Libya, Lebanon, Grenada, Honduras, Panama, Somalia, Bosnia, Syria, and more. In the past thirty-five years the U.S. engaged in more systematic fighting in Operation Desert Storm, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Yet antiwar movements are decentralized and find little traction in policy.

Notably, in many of these instances, the U.S. has maintained that the warmaking aimed to serve civilian populations. In the past twenty years, American policymakers have justified the war in Afghanistan with claims that a U.S. withdrawal would give power back to the Taliban with its violations of human rights, women’s rights, and democratic norms. In that same vein, American observers have commented paternalistically on Afghani women’s choice or obligation to wear face coverings as a rationale for military action. And as in Korea, the U.S. justified going to war with claims of protecting the American way of life, and explained continued investment abroad with

in a wide range of willing and unwilling GIs, objections to sending Americans abroad lost some of their urgency. With armed forces comprised of only voluntary military personnel, the possibility of dissent or critique of American military action from within the ranks was substantially diminished. This analysis offers some explanation of why U.S. antiwar movements since the 70s have not had the magnitude of those in the Vietnam era. See Beth Bailey, America’s Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Scovill Currin, “An Army of the Willing: Fayette’Nam, Soldier Dissent, and the Untold Story of the All-Volunteer Force” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2015).
nebulous claims about target countries’ fitness to govern themselves and care for their own populations.14

“While governments have long used humanitarian assistance as an instrument of foreign policy,” claims the scholar and UN advisor Elizabeth Ferris, “the war on terrorism has intensified this trend.”15 In 2003 USAID administrators threatened to discontinue support for non-governmental organizations working in Afghanistan if the organizations did not specify to recipients that their operations were U.S.-funded. Some NGOs objected to this policy as it undermined their credibility as independent organizations and it required them to work toward U.S. policy aims. What resulted was competition between humanitarian organizations willing to accept American dollars and those that valued their independence. Ferris argues that this triggered new U.S. investment in private companies undertaking “reconstruction activities, including in public health and education where NGOs have traditionally been active.” Essentially, the U.S. government began contracting out to private, for-profit corporations the kind of care work once done voluntarily by the kinds of nonprofit organizations profiled in this dissertation.16

15 Elizabeth Ferris, “Faith-based and Secular Humanitarian Organizations” International Review of the Red Cross 87 no. 838 (June 2005), 323.
16 Ibid.
But the reliance on civilian helpers was not new. As we have seen, the U.S. has been invested, formally and tacitly, in precisely those kinds of caring activities in a context of willful destruction for more than seventy years.
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Biography

Hannah Ontiveros received her B.A. in history from Auburn University in 2014. She started her doctoral education at Duke in 2014. With a background in labor history and labor organizing, Hannah originally set out to study gender and sexuality in early 20th-century union movements. Through her coursework, however, Hannah developed an interest in studying militarism, empire, and U.S. in the World. She turned her sights on the Korean War and its impact on the Cold War United States. Hannah received her M.A. from Duke in 2017. In the course of her archival research, Hannah found the American-Korean Foundation, through which she discovered the network of aid work in Korea described in this project, a story that spoke to American international commitments, twentieth-century religiosity, and the gendered labor of empire.

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