CHAPTER 2
There are only permanent interests and not permanent friends. President Harry S. Truman on February 12, 1951 formally recommended to Congress that the United States provide India with two million tons of grain in emergency assistance in order to meet a food crisis of potentially catastrophic dimensions.

"We cannot turn a deaf ear to India's appeal. Our friendship for the people of India and our traditional concern for human suffering impel us to take every reasonable step to alleviate mass hunger and distress".¹

The message of President Truman stressed the humanitarian reasons for meeting India's food needs but the President and his advisers were convinced that a prompt U.S. response to the crisis (S.O.S.) would serve diplomatic ends as well. It was at a critical juncture in U.S. - Indian relations that the presidential appeal came. The Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's philosophy of non-alignment, combined with sharp differences over policy towards China, the Korean War, Western Colonialism, and other matters, and created a distinct chill in relations between Washington and New Delhi. The Truman administration, accordingly hoped that American food might pay valuable diplomatic dividends by helping India to recognize that its true interests lay with the West.
The initiative, ironically proved largely counterproductive. It boomeranged as the Congress was in a recalcitrant mood. The Bill was approved, but only after a long and acrimonious debate. The debate provided a public forum for Congressional critics of Indian foreign policy. Many Congressmen chose to vent their frustrations in a most undiplomatic and frank manner. The Indian officials, who once notoriously hypersensitive to even the mildest of criticisms, bristled at what they considered scathing attacks on their foreign policy.

This episode in U.S. diplomacy if scrutinized properly, illustrates some of the dilemmas inherent in seeking to use humanitarian aid to further diplomatic objectives. The wheat loan affair, additionally, captures in microcosm many of the fundamental problems that plagued U.S.-Indian relations during the early Cold War years, a subject that has received scant scholarly attention. This legislation also sheds some light on tensions between the executive-legislative during Truman years; it brings in the glare of publicity how Congress could play an independent and disruptive role on an important foreign policy questions, even at the height of Cold War bipartisanship.

Almost immediately, following the creation of an independent Indian state on August 15, 1947, the Truman administration sought to foster close ties with the new nationalist regime. It was believed by the American policy
makers that India was destined to play a major role on the world stage with its vigorous leadership, rich natural resources, and vast size and population. The dramatic success of the Chinese Communists and the deepening Cold War in Europe reinforced such thinking.

Ambassador Henry F. Grady held the view, as early as December 1947, that once Washington stepped up its economic assistance programmes, the American influence with New Delhi would increase substantially. He observed, "It is the most effective channel for keeping India on our side and under our influence". Indo-American tensions were actually aggravated, however, by the financial aid questions. Indian diplomats several times in 1948 and 1949 with their American counterparts explored the prospects of financial assistance. Nehru’s aides during his visit to Washington discussed the specific possibility of procuring one million tons of U.S. wheat to help meet a shortfall in Indian grain production. However, those overtures did not result in any mutually satisfactory agreements. The Indian needs were viewed by the American planners as a relatively low priority. They were preoccupied with Europe’s financial crisis and other pressing concerns. The negotiations were further complicated when the Indians insisted that no political strings be attached to U.S. aid. One Indian diplomat was explained by Henderson that his government’s insistence on no string presented a major hurdle as Congress did not approve and
allocate economic aid without maintaining some check or control on its use. The Indians were convinced that the United States sought to use economic aid as a quid pro quo for Indian alignment with the West. The Central Intelligence Agency concluded in July 1949 that "India was a major Asiatic power" and was "alone in a position to compete with Chinese Communism for hegemony in Southeast Asia". It was hoped by the leading Administration planners that India would ultimately emerge not only as the principal ideological rival to China, but also as a bulwark against the further expansion of this 'RED MALAISE' on the Asian mainland. As early as September 9, 1949, secret office memorandum of Truman Administration had recommended that 1,000,000 tones of wheat without any payment be given to India with the condition that India should store it and not consume it. This gift should help break hoarding - inflation cycle developing in India. When Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru arrived in Washington for his first official visit to the United States in October, 1949, many top Administration analysts considered India crucial to the containment of Communism in Asia; some even prophesied that Nehru's visit would help convince him of the folly of neutralism and the logic of alignment with the West. One senior official was of the opinion that Nehru was "outstandingly the most vital and influential person for the accomplishment of U.S. objectives in Asia".
The voyage of discovery of Nehru to the U.S.A. was a fiasco. Given such unrealistically lofty expectations, it is difficult to judge the Nehru visit as anything else than a setback for U.S. calculations. Meetings between him, Truman, the Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, and other leading officials were unfailingly courteous but they yielded little of substance. To the dismay of Nehru’s hosts this visit instead revealed quite startlingly that on numerous critical international issues Nehru’s views fundamentally diverged from those of his interlocutors. On his policy of non-alignment Nehru refused to budge even an inch, different on the nature of the Soviet threat, revealed his intentions of giving full recognition to new Communist government in RED CHINA at the earliest, and was of the opinion that not communism but colonialism was the gravest threat to world peace. The U.S. ambassador in India, Loy W. Henderson, gave the following analysis to his British counterpart:

"The general impression was left in America that India was making no contribution to (the solution of) world problems, was unlikely do so as long as the present policy persisted and that Nehru displayed little sense of the practical realms."

In the aftermath of Nehru’s visit, the U.S.-Indian relations floundered. Ambassador Henderson decried in April 1950, the "steadily increasing", Indian "feelings of unfriendliness" toward the United States. He noted that
India deeply resented Washington’s unwillingness to provide it with sufficient levels of economic assistance. India’s muted criticism of the Soviet Union, its uncooperative policies towards Indo-China and Japan, its warm relations with China, and its unwillingness to change its stance towards Pakistan on the emotional Kashmir issue all served to heighten tensions between the two democracies. On the eve of the outbreak of war in Korea, some U.S. officials who had expressed so much hope for India just before the Nehru’s visit could express little more than dismay in the months following. The British Foreign Office was so alarmed at the steady deterioration in relations between New Delhi and Washington that in September 1950, one senior British diplomat remarked to a group of U.S. officials that U.S.-Indian differences "constituted a running sore".

In July 1950, the Indian Government once again turned to Washington for help as it was fearing an increasingly serious food shortage. It requested the United States to urgently make available 500,000 tons of wheat at concessional prices. The Secretary of State Dean Acheson was requested by George C. McChee, the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, that the United States should consider the Indian request, "both on humanitarian and on broad political grounds". The previous year the Indians reacted very sharply because of
the U.S. failure to provide wheat. McGhee outlined the advantages of a positive response:

"The Government of India would benefit internally through the improved stability of an important free nation of Asia, from the disposal of a commodity in surplus supply, and from the evidence given of humanitarian interests". McGhee stressed, moreover, that the grains in question were not for human consumption, but were used strictly for feeding poultry in the United States.11

Acheson on September 9, 1950, presented a memorandum to President Truman, who subsequently approved the proposal. Acheson stated upon the ability of the transaction which would help in bolstering "a friendly and stable government" at a "critical juncture in our international relations". Because of limited U.S. financial resources, "an integrated overall program of economic assistance" for India was out of the question. It was argued by the Secretary that the proposed sale of milo was "the only practicable way in which we can be of help at this time". India was to finance the major part of the sale, with the United States allocating $4.5 million out of a special Asian contingency fund to make up the difference.12

Before any final decision could be taken regarding the transaction, the American officials came to learn that India's food problems was of a far more critical nature. India's Minister of Agriculture, Kanaiyalal Maneklal Munshi, on the evening of November 6, 1950, called on Henderson to relate what he called some deeply distressing news. Munshi
had just returned from Bihar, and he said that floods from
the previous summer combined with a subsequent drought had
already destroyed an estimated 2.6 million tons of grain in
that food producing area. Moreover, droughts and floods in
other regions had upset all governmental food plans. The
Minister was of the opinion that if the public comes to
learn how limited present reserves were there would surely
be chaos. He opined that now was the ideal "psychological
moment" if the United States had any intention of extending
economic assistance to India. Munshi exclaimed that if acted
upon immediately regarding the extension of aid, it could
become a decisive factor in determining India's future
orientation. He asked Henderson specifically, if there might
be any way to revive India's dormant request for one million
ton of grain, either as an outright gift or at least at
highly favourable terms.13

The demarche of Munshi was strictly an unofficial
one, but it had far-reaching diplomatic ramifications.
Munshi's argument that India was at critical turning point
regarding its foreign relations and that immediate and
timely assistance might help in bringing the two estranged
democracies closer quite intrigued Henderson. One just could
not dismiss such soundings as purely self-serving. Sir
Archibald Nye, the British High Commissioner in New Delhi
and Henderson on the contrary had already discussed in some
depth the likelihood that India's staggering economic
problems might necessitate a major change in its foreign
The Indian Finance Minister C.D. Deshmukh on November 1, 1950, had informed Henderson in utmost confidence that Nehru is willing to accept the outside financial assistance and it was only the United States which was in a position to provide that support. McGhee was told by the Indian Ambassador Vijay Lakshmi Pandit, several days later in Washington that if the U.S. economic aid is provided without any political strings attached to it then Nehru is ready to accept it. In early November the powerful Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar V. Patel wrote one confidential letter to Henderson. In which it was noted that in the recent speech that he had delivered, he had welcomed U.S. aid.\textsuperscript{15}

Madame Pandit formally presented to the State Department her government’s request for two million tons of wheat on December 15, 1950. She emphasized the urgency of India’s food requirements, citing an extraordinary string of natural disasters. Although Acheson expressed sympathy and desire to help but made no commitments, as it would require Congressional green signal.\textsuperscript{16} Henderson sent a cable to the State Department on December 17 in which he had summarized his views. On Nehru’s instructions the previous evening Deshmukh had called upon Henderson, to elicit his support for India’s request. In India’s economic relations with the United States the request represented a "formal turning point" said Deshmukh. After a careful Cabinet consideration, India had come to the conclusion that for the India
stability U.S. support was vital. Deshmukh's analysis echoed in Henderson's message. The Cabinet decision was called by Henderson "of utmost significance", suggesting that "such opposition as has existed hitherto to closer economic relations between India and the U.S. had crumbled". He urged to carefully consider the Indian request and warned, "I am concerned, lest downright rejection of this overture or evasive treatment of it might have an extremely adverse effect on our position in India and South Asia." 17

In the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs that viewpoint found a receptive hearing. NEA officials had long held this view that the generous economic assistance would help in improving the U.S.-Indian relations. The officers in NEA immediately prepared a series of memoranda urging a positive U.S. response on broad foreign policy grounds, following the request of Madame Pandit. One NEA paper noted, "Failure to respond to India's emergency request for food grains would seriously endanger the Nehru Government, and any other government which might follow would be decidedly worse from our point of view". McGhee underscored that point in a memorandum of December 19 for Under Secretary of State James Webb. He stated that "the Indian request involved our making a critical decision.... If we do not take full advantage of this opportunity, our position in the whole of Asia will be adversely affected." 18
Under the Chairmanship of Webb a meeting was held on December 22 in which NEA’s recommendations were discussed by senior State Department officers. Although it was agreed upon that India’s request should certainly be pursued further, but Willard L. Thorp, the Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, sounded a cautionary note. He argued that Congress would not be probably swayed by humanitarian considerations even if combined with arguments for a likely improvement in U.S.-Indian relations. Since "nothing would be worse than a turn-down by Congress", Thorp insisted that NEA develop a more effective political rationale for the emergency aid. He said "what that is how we get it are the key questions". McGhee was accordingly instructed by Webb to review the recommendations of NEA and propose a specific course of action, especially with regard to generating needed public and Congressional support.\(^{19}\)

Such support was fortunately developing independently. The formation of an American Emergency Food Committee for India was formed by Dorothy Norman, author and political activist, during January 4, 1951. This Committee was joined by a number of famous personalities, including former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, novelist Pearl Buck, Walter White, Executive Director for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and leaders of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and the National Council of Churches. The committee met McGhee. The following day (January 5), White wrote "As I see
it we ought to aid India, first for reasons of simple humanitarianism and, second, because food, or the lack of it, will play a material role in whether India stays on our side or goes Communist through the fall of the Nehru Government. The Friends Service Committee, the National Lutheran Council, the YMCA, and the National Council of Churches announced publicly within the next several weeks their support for the relief.

The Indian request was supported vigorously by many leading newspapers. The NEW YORK TIMES declared, "There should be no question of politics and no conditions of any sort. We are privileged to be in a position to help and there should be no more hesitation about it in Washington" (January 15, 1951). Ralph McGill, Editor of the ATLANTA CONSTITUTION wrote that millions in India would surely starve if they did not receive wheat from the United States, and decried any thought of taking "petty revenge against Nehru at the expense of these millions of persons". The CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR added that if other nations feel that the United States "is proposed to use hunger as a weapon to compel conformity then the result in world opinion could be very unfortunate". Prompt American action was called for by the WASHINGTON POST, a sharp critic of Nehru, "If a catastrophe is to be prevented aid will have to be forthcoming from the United States.... The food ought to be granted, and quickly...."
The Senators and Congressman led their support to the chorus of the American Press. Representative Jacob K. Javits, New York on January 8, 1951, introduced before Congress a concurrent resolution "favouring assistance to the Republic of India and its people to help them meet the crisis of a drastic food shortage and threat of famine in 1951". This resolution was forwarded to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. It picked up substantial support. The lead in pressing the Administration for swift action on the India request was taken by Senators H. Alexander Smith of New Jersey and Hubert H. Humphery of Minnesota. These two Senators joined hands with a bipartisan group of twenty-five Senators and Congressmen on January 31, who had signed a letter to President Truman urging him to support an emergency food load on India. The letter implored, "Unless we act promptly many hundreds of thousands of people in India face starvation". Although the signees noted their opposition to India’s foreign policy but they insisted "the need to prevent starvation is entirely separate from all political considerations".

The State Department sought the informal concurrence of the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Treasury, the Economic Cooperation Administration and the Bureau of the Budget, before it could formally submit the recommendation to the President. Because of the initial reluctance of Treasury and Budget that time-consuming
procedure got more complicated. McGhee and his colleagues in NEA had to determine whether a sufficient amount of grain would be available, can adequate shipping be obtained, and to help finance the transaction whether sufficient funds could be released. The State Department had to prepare a specific course of action, consult informally with Congressional leaders, and anticipate any possible political objections. Providing support for a neutralist nation was a daunting task laid with many hurdles and many even within the government were hesitant. William C. Foster, Administrator of ECA, wrote to McGhee, "As I stated before, I am not quite clear that (Nehru) is on the side of the Angels". While acknowledging that "the interests of humanity" compelled the United States to "do what we reasonable can", he added an important caveat:

"With our resources stained to the utmost, aid should be given in fullest measure to those who are demonstratively on our side and willing to fight for it".23

Opposition from Key Congressional spokesmen was more troubling. Many on Capitol Hill were inflamed and enraged because of India's firm opposition at the United Nations to a U.S. sponsored resolution condemning China for aggression in Korea. It was hinted publicly that Nehru's uncooperative policies might lead Senate Foreign Relations Committee to take its time before acting on any India aid legislation, by the powerful Chairman, Senator Tom Connally of Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The comments of
several other senators, who announced that they would grant an Indian aid request with little enthusiasm underscored the political difficulties that the request might encounter in Congress.²⁴

McGhee in a preliminary meeting with a sub-committee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee presented the Administration's case for assistance to India on January 26, 1951. To his dismay, he was informed that some legislators had serious objections to the assistance bill. The plan was sharply criticised by Connally, whose support was imperative. The blunt Texan spewed venom and said, "Nehru is out giving us hell at the time, working against us and voting against us". Nehru's purported hatred for "every white man" was decried by him. McGhee was told that "you are going to have one hell of a time getting this thing through the Congress or through this committee or through the full committee". Opposition was expressed to the assistance bill on the grounds that it was unlikely to gain Congressional passage, by even Senator J. William Fulbright, normally a strong supporter of the Administration. Senator Guy M. Gillette observed, "On the basis of the discussion there is a lack of enthusiasm on my part for (McGhee's) proposal, and that is an understatement".²⁵

NEA in its final recommendations, sent to the Secretary of State Acheson on January 30, sought to counter these political objections by arguing that the proposed wheat deal had to be presented in the context of larger U.S.
national security interests. McGhee said, "If we do not assist India in its present crisis, elements inimical to the United States and the Western world generally will be strengthened". The position of "our friends" in India would solidify by U.S. assistance, thus offsetting "much of the anti-Western bitterness which enables Nehru to maintain his present posture in foreign affairs". Although McGhee conceded that no "overnight change" would be expected in U.S.-Indian relations, but he also predicted that the assistance would lay the basis for a rapprochement between New Delhi and Washington.  

The transaction was justified by an even more explicit cold war rationale. It was noted by NEA that "The present threat of famine in India promises to create conditions ideally suited to the subversive activities of the Communist Party of India". For countering that communist appeal, an early U.S. response to the food grains request would be the most effective means available to the American government. Although, quite frequently the officials in Washington got irritated by Nehru's statements and policies should not blind the United States "to the vital importance of not losing India and South Asia to Communism by default". If per chance the present Indian government fell, "India will either be thrown into a state of chaos or come under control of a government for less sympathetic to our ideals and objectives than the present government". A new communist influenced government might even emerge that would swing
India into the Soviet orbit. "By comparison Nehru’s current effusions would probably seem quite innocuous". Acheson personally endorsed the recommendation of NEA. He related to his staff that he had decided that the United States should support it whole-heartedly "rather than just backing into it". The President should deliver a formal message to Congress urging prompt action. Acheson emphasised that the President "should make a high play of it". Although, while conceding that the United States could never gain any political concessions from India, he suggested that "by playing the thing right it would be possible to make a definite asset of the whole transaction". Truman informally approved Acheson’s reasoning on January 31, 1951. He indicated that he would prepare a message to Congress and meet with key Congressional leaders as soon as possible.

The Indian Emergency Assistant Act of 1951 received bipartisan support from the U.S. Congress. After a meeting at the White House, which was called by the President and at which members representing both the House and parties were present, the bill was referred to the Congress. Consequently, a bipartisan group of Senators and Congressmen introduced legislation in the Senate and the House respectively. In the Senate it consisted of 7 Democrats and 6 Republicans, and in the House, 5 Republicans and 5 Democrats. So here was the first time in the U.S. Congress there was a substantial bipartisan support to the idea of helping India to meet its food problem. For the first time
in Indo-U.S. relations (since the debate on UNRRA) there was a debate in the U.S. Congress with respect to food assistance to India. This was an indication of the growing realization of the importance of winning Indian goodwill and helping to avert instability.

From January 26, 1951 to June 15, 1951, when the India Emergency Food Assistance Act was signed by President Truman, for nearly 4 months the bill was before the Congress. During the hiatus and the carping debates that followed there were arguments for the bill and arguments against the bill, and debate as to whether the bill should carry any condition. Most of the speakers who supported aid to India emphasized the national interest of the United States in one way or the other. The speaker, Sam Rayburn (Democrat, Texas) for example stated,

"We need friends in the East..... You talk about expense. I do not want to offend this great nation with 300 million people in it today by refusing to consider even bread to the starving people of India.... We need friends in the world today as we never needed them before. I am glad for this rule because I think it will help us from a selfish standpoint, if for no other reasons".

Economic and strategic considerations were well summed up by Senator Hubert H. Humphery (Democrat, Minnesota):

"Make no mistake about it, if we lose the Republic of India to Communist aggression from without, or to infiltration from within, we shall have suffered a major defeat..., here is a nation which has potentially rich resources... a nation which strategically is of vital importance to the security of the free world. All one need to do it to look at the map to see India, which liberally comes up under the underbelly of the Soviet Empire... has control of the entrance to the Near East and into the Pacific. Her boundaries, her coastline, her ports are all important to the free world".

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Many were of the opinion that foreign policy today is not only a question of politics, but also a question of economics, finance and propaganda. Senator Humphery was quite critical of one aspect of the United States Foreign Aid programs. He pointed out that the United States foreign policy was placing more emphasis on the military aspects rather than on a constructive approach to the problem of ensuring a decent standard of living to the masses of the poverty stricken areas of the entire world. He said,

"Throughout the world the United States has a reputation for answering any request for arms aid. What India is asking today is not 300 tons.... What she is asking for is something we have in abundance".

He pointed out that food could play an important part in the game of power struggle. It could be "a weapon in the arsenal of democracy". And due to the existence of an ideological struggle in the world, it was imperative for the United States Government to help the developing nations of the world solve their problems, by means of democratic methods. The advocates of the humanitarian argument went as far as to state that, though they did not approve of the foreign policy of the Government of India, they strongly favoured speedy action on the Indian Emergency Assistance Act. A letter written and signed by 14 Senators and 11 Representatives and addressed to the United States President stated: We do not want or desire to help the suffering people of India, within the reasonable limits of our
capacities, to be regarded as in any sense lessening our opposition to the apparent views of the Government of India with respect to the Chinese Communist aggression in Korea. On the other hand, our firm opposition to their apparent position of the Government of India does not lessen the acute shortage in India. Moreover, there was general agreement at the meeting, that an increase in the supply of strategic materials to the United States should not be made a condition for the shipment of wheat.\textsuperscript{30}

When former President Herbert Hoover announced his support for an Emergency Wheat Loan on February 7, the Administration moved closer to building the necessary bipartisan consensus for India aid. Hoover remarked at a press conference that Americans must feed hungry people without regard to politics, after a one hour meeting with President Truman in the White House. He went on to say, "This does not fall into the category of politics, but falls into the category of Christianity". The hopes of administration strategists for quick Congressional acceptance were given a boost after such vigorous support from a Republican leader whose experience with overseas relief efforts was unparalleled.\textsuperscript{31}

A more ominous note was sounded in a White House Meeting on February 9 with Congressional leaders from both parties. Serious objections were raised by both Tom
Connally and Alexander Willy. At times the ensuing debate became "hot and heavy". James P. Richards, ranking Republican member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, also remained unconvinced. In the light of Nehru's unhelpful policies, following the meeting, several of these legislators privately expressed to reporters their reluctance to support any assistance to India.  

Truman sent on February 12 a special message to the newly convened Eighty-Second Congress, strongly urging that it provide India with two million tons of grain in emergency food relief. The President emphasized the traditional American concern for human suffering, after cataloguing the series of unfortunate developments that had brought India to the brink of crisis. In a message to the U.S. Congress, Truman pointed out:

I recognise there are important differences between our Government and the Government of India with regard to the course of action which would most effectively curb aggression and establish peace in Asia. However, these differences should not blind us to the needs of the Indian people. These differences must not deflect us from our tradition of friendly aid to alleviate human suffering.

Although disappointed at the foreign policy differences with India, the United States Government was well aware of the strategic importance of India.

India is the largest of the new nations of Asia which have attained independence since the end of the World War II.... The people of India are striving earnestly to establish representative government and democratic institutions as unified and independent nation.
Reflecting on the arguments of some of the opposition members in the Congress, who had argued that aid should not be given to India on grounds of foreign policy differences with the United States, the President pointed out that, "it is not our objective in foreign affairs to dominate other nations. Our objective is to strengthen the free nations through cooperation based on a common devotion to freedom". President implied that it was fully in line with the objectives of the United States foreign policy to ensure that India did not adopt the course of totalitarian planning and development or should turn to countries hostile to the United States. "We must counter the false promises of Communist imperialism with constructive action for human betterment. In this way, and in this way only, can we make human liberty secure against the forces which threaten it throughout the world today", sais Truman.

In his message to the Congress, Truman made a request for a sanction of 2,000,000 tons of grains for India in the form of a half grant and half loan. He seemed to be quite aware of the implications involved in leaving India alone in her hour of need. He said, "Like any nation which has just achieved independence, India is confronted with great difficulties... difficulties which have been aggravated by the crisis in Asia caused by the aggressive forces of communist imperialism. The present food crisis, if
permitted to continue, would magnify these difficulties and threaten the stability of India." Truman explained why the stability of India was so significant for the United States. He said, "It is important to the free world that the democratic institutions which are emerging in India be maintained and strengthened. With a population of almost 350,000,000 people, India has substantial mineral resources and important industries. Its continued stability is essential to the future of free institutions in Asia."

Calling for quick action to meet India’s pressing need for immediate assistance, the President urged that food shipments must begin by April. Going even beyond the terms of India’s request, Truman recommended that a substantial portion of the assistance should be given as a grant. The State Department highlighted this angle, printed copies of the President’s message, entitling the address: INDIAN FOOD CRISIS - OPPORTUNITY TO COMBAT COMMUNIST IMPERIALISM.33

Initially, all went according to plan. Twenty-nine senators and eleven representatives offered identical bills for Indian food relief on February 15. They took their cue from Truman’s proposal. The Administration planners were particularly pleased because of strong Republican support, especially since the party had gained seats in both the House and Senate during the elections of 1950. At the last minute the bill sponsors were joined by the leading
Republican spokesman on foreign affairs, Senator Robert Taft. Two of the most vocal critics of Truman's Asian policy, Senator William F. Knowland and Representative Walter H. Judd, also cosponsored the legislation. Even Senator Joseph McCarthy announced his support, declaring that he did "not favour any political conditions in meeting a humanitarian need". Public hearings were opened by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on February 20. During the course of 'Hearings' conducted by the House Foreign Affairs Committee, representative of the Truman Administration advocated relief assistance to India from various angles. Speaking strongly in favour of India, the Secretary of State, Dean Acheson reminded the Committee that "Human need overrides political differences", hence foreign policy differences should not come in the way of relief assistance. Answering the question as to why India had not purchased wheat from Pakistan, the Secretary of State stated that in 1950 Pakistan did have some surplus wheat, but because of lack of compromise as to the price, Pakistan had sold the wheat somewhere else, but in 1951, Pakistan did not have much wheat to spare, because there too the crops had been damaged by natural calamities. Acheson pointed that due to foreign exchange crunch, India could not pay for the 2,000,000 tons of wheat, that she needed. She could not draw on her sterling balances, because these funds produced the bulk of international assets. "If the balances were used to
finance the importation of the 2 million tons of grains... the funds available for developmental and other essential purposes would be correspondingly reduced".

Stanley Andrews, Director, Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, pointed out that the United States could afford to give 75 bushels of grain to India. He stated, "But when we take the total needs in the United States as we see some of them, plus our international commitments to the wheat agreement, and other countries in the world to which we have sold wheat, we still will have a carryover at the end of this year of about 425 million to 450 million bushels of wheat".

He pointed out the besides the surplus wheat, they had about 2,000,000 tons of rice, above their normal requirements. Some beans and some grain sorghums too were in surplus. Williard Thorp, Assistant Secretary to State for Economic Affairs, stated that the United States Government regarded the Indian food problem as a problem to be handled outside the political arena.

The Administration's case was effectively presented by Acheson, was quickly followed by Assistant Secretary Thorp and many other governmental experts. For the Administration's arguments the House Committee proved a particularly receptive audience. Indeed, the bill had been cosponsored by one-third of the Committee's members. On
March 1 the Committee, acting speedily approved legislation to authorise emergency assistance to India by a grant of funds to purchase 2,000,000 tons of food grains. 1,000,000 tons was to provide immediately and the remainder to be shipped subject to a thorough review of the situation. 34

During the hearings some opposition did surface. Acheson was sharply questioned and grilled by several committee members. They objected in principle to aid for a government that was on the other side of the fence regarding Korea. That a deal should only be concluded on a strict quid pro quo basis was insisted upon by the republican Congressman John M. Vorys, with the blessing of former President Hoover. In a minority report, signed by Vorys and three of this Republican colleagues, the Ohio lawmaker’s view were also incorporated. It noted "India needs grain immediately, we have the grain. We need strategic materials from India over a period of years; India has those materials. We should make India a loan which can be repaid in strategic materials". The Administration planners were of the view that the path had been smoothened for early passage of the bill, despite the sensitive issue raised in the minority report. After all, it was supported by twenty-three of the committee’s twenty-seven members. 35

Optimism, soon proved unfounded. Acheson was told by Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations, Jack F. McFall, on March 13 that the India wheat bill was
"facing serious trouble" on Capitol Hill. He expressed doubt whether it would pass in its present form. Several factors were at work in this dramatic reversal. First, the depth of Congressional support was overestimated by the Administration. A sense of false confidence was because of the quick action of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Approval by the Conservative House Rules Committee was required, before the bill could even reach the House floor. A stalemate soon developed in the Committee, because in favour of Vory's minority report a coalition of Republicans and conservative Southern Democrats argued. Second, the Senate Foreign relations Committee was preoccupied with hearings on the controversial question of assigning U.S. governed troops to Europe. Senator Connally, moreover, who had already expressed his reservations about aid to India, showed no inclination to schedule an early hearings.

Disappointment was expressed in India over the Congressional delay. Sir Girja Bajpai, Secretary General of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, informed Ambassador Henderson on March 12, of his deep concern at reports reaching New Delhi regarding the status of the aid bill. Chakaravarti Rajagopalachari told the U.S. Envoy that the graciousness of the gesture had already been lost. The State Department was reported by Henderson that America's friends in India, many of whom had staked their political fortunes
on a favourable U.S. response, were "extremely anxious"; conversely, "elements fundamentally hostile or suspicious" to the United States were "becoming more triumphantly cynical". Nehru in a private conversation with American writer Edgar on March 22, expressed his growing frustration with the Congressional holdup. He snapped, "We too have our pride". He added, "The way in which you are handling our request for grain in insulting and outrageous. If we go through centuries of poverty and millions of people die of hunger, we shall never submit to outside pressure".37

Henderson advised that it would "damage our good name for years to come". He was particularly worried lest serious famine strikes various parts of India with Washington being held responsible because of its dalliance. The seriousness of the problem was underscored, in a State Department memorandum for Acheson, dated March 19, 1951. The chances of massive famine would increase, unless grain could begin moving to India by April 1. "Each week's delay, therefore, means that the benefit which will accrue to us from the grant will be further minimized and malnutrition in India will grow more acute". McGhee cabled his urgent recommendations on March 26, While in Jordan as part of an official tour of the Middle East and South Asia. He cautioned, "Acting too late, if not too little, will deny us the benefits we would otherwise expect from our response".38
The Truman Administration sought to regain the initiative with Congress. With a renewed plea for prompt Congressional action, the President opened his news conference of March 29. Acheson had met privately with Connally in an effort to impress upon him the urgency of avoiding further delay in opening Senate hearings. The Administration's difficulties were compounded because of the offer by the Soviet Union and China to provide India with emergency food aid was announced on March 30. The officials admitted privately that such seeming largesse won important propaganda points. The State Department present anew for prompt Congressional action on April 3. A "background statement", was released by it to the press, prepared for interested Congressmen, that setforth the critical importance of the wheat loan. Reflecting the Administration's mounting concern, one department official asserted that "all the people of Asia will compare the U.S. response to its generosity toward Europe". Unless some quick action occurred, that comparison, clearly would be an embarrassingly unfavourable one. Acheson remarked at a Cabinet meeting that further delay, "will hurt us in India and help (the) Communists". The NEW YORK TIMES effectively captured the administration's dilemma in an editorial of April 6:

"Generous help loses the freshness of its warmth if it is dragged through a long argument about our own self interest.... Much damage has already been done and the United States must act immediately if it is to be repaired".
Among the main points raised by the opposition were those of foreign policy differences, economic instability of the United States to bear the burden of "hand-outs" to foreign countries, moral argument that the Government of the country had no right to give away the taxpayer's money like that, and the contention that the humanitarian argument of the support of the bill did not carry much weight.

The most frequently expounded argument of the opposition was that of the foreign policy differences. It was pointed out that of India did not deserve aid on account of the conduct of her foreign policies which at times ran counter to the line followed by the United States Government. Reference was made to India's stand on the Korean issue, the recognition of China, and the conduct of India in the United Nations. Ezekiel C. Gattings (Democrat, Arkansas) stated that as an example of the unfriendly attitude of the Government of India towards the United States, why are the Indians hesitant in supplying critical material which they has in abundance. Harris Elsworth (Republican, Oregon) argued that there was no "really sound, logical and business like reason" for making this loan or for passing this bill. In the first place the treasury of the United States is in bad shape and with a debt of $270,000,000 a continuation of this give away policy will spell ruin for the economy of the Americans. He pointed to a report of the Department of Agriculture, dated May 2, 1951, to the effect that there was no surplus of grain in the United States.
Some were of the view that India would not be able to repay the loan. Dean Acheson had stated in his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, that "India could not pay for the two million tons without drawing heavily upon its sterling balances with the United Kingdom", and it was interpreted by E.E. Cox (Democrat, Georgia), to indicate India’s inability to repay the loan. Acheson used the argument in support of a gift of grains for India. Some members who were against the bill strengthened their arguments by quoting the Indian leaders as having said that there was no serious famine in the country. Omar Burdeson (Democrat, Texas) quoted from Nehru’s speech of May 1, 1951 and argued that according to the Indian leaders there was no real famine in India, hence there was no need for this legislation. The main controversy in the U.S. Congress was on the question as to whether aid to India should be extended at all or not. Then there were some minor controversies as to whether the aid should be in the form of a loan or a grant. Another issue: whether it should be in the form of a half loan and a half grant. Finally, there was a question whether there should be any political or economic conditions attached to the aid.

As previously stated, the initial Administration proposal was in the form of a half loan and half grant. But there was quite a heated controversy in the Congress over this proposal. Although, there were a few ardent supporters of the idea of aid in the form of a full grant, yet there
were influences working for turning the entire aid in form of a loan. But the controversy on the idea of aid in the form of a total grant was ended by an amendment. This amendment proposed that the grant basis be disallowed in its entirety, and that a straight business like loan of $190,000,000 be substituted and it was proposed further, that this loan be on the same basis as requested by the Government of India. The amendment was passed by a vote of 52 to 32, with 12 abstaining. In the House of Representatives the bill was introduced as a loan only. Only in the Senate, some members strongly favoured the idea of a half grant, but it did not get the approval of the majority.

Next was the controversy as to the conditions or strings attached to the bill. Whether there should be political or economic conditions attached to the bill, was also a subject matter of debate. Some members were against attaching any strings to the bill, whether political or economic. Some others specified their opposition only to the political conditions. There was strong pressure for attaching economic conditions. In its final form the bill did not carry any political conditions, it did, however, carry economic conditions.

Senator Lehman was vigorously opposed to any conditions being attached to the officer of aid. He reminded the U.S. Congress of its responsibilities to the people of Asia. In the case of the emergency assistance to India, the U.S. Congress could show to the people of Asia
that "the policies of America are truly based on interest in the welfare and well being of people regardless of race or absolute political conformity". Men like Representative Cox and George W. Malone (Republican Nevada) demanded that economic conditions should be attached to the bill. Cox thought that India could well pay for the wheat by way of strategic minerals. He referred to the embargo by India of Jute, Burlap and Monazite sand to the United States.

Homer Ferguson (Republican Michigan) introduced an amendment in the Senate demanding that the repayment terms should include transfer to the United States by India of strategic materials which are in short supply in the United States. This amendment was passed in the Senate and was finally agreed to in the Conference meeting of both the Houses. India was required to pay strategic materials to the United States by way of repayment of loan. Senator Styles Bridges (Republican New Hampshire) introduced another amendment in the Senate, which aimed at specifying the strategic materials. This was also agreed to in the Senate, but was rejected in the Conference report, and in the final shape the strategic materials were not specified.

MUNDT AMENDMENT:

This amendment is significant in terms of its long term effects on Indo-U.S. relations. It was introduced by Senator Karl E. Mundt (Republican, South Dakota). It provided for the use of the interest on the loan, for educational purposes.
Any sums paid by the Government of India..., as interest on the principal of any debt incurred under this act shall be placed in a special deposit account in the Treasury of the United States, to remain available until expended. This account shall be available to the Department of State for the following uses:

(i) Allocation for designated educational, agricultural, experimental, scientific, medicinal or philanthropic activities, to American institutions engaged in such activities in India.

(ii) Studies, instruction, technical training and other educational activities in the United States and its territories and possessions: (a) for students, professors, other academic persons, and technicians who are citizens of India, and (b) with the approval of appropriate agencies, institutions or organizations in India, and technicians who are citizens of India, including in both cases travel expenses, tuition, subsistence, and other allowances and expenses incident to such activities, and

(iii) The selection, purchase, and shipment of (a) American scientific, technical and scholarly books and books of American literature for higher educational and research institutions of India, and (b) American laboratory and technical equipment for higher education and research in India, and (c) the interchange of similar materials and equipment from India for higher education and research in the United States.

This was the most significant provision of the bill, as it had long-term effects on Indo-US relations by way of two programs - SMITH-MUNDT educational exchange program and the FULBRIGHT educational exchange program.

CONFERENCE REPORT: As the bill to extend emergency food assistance to India passed both the Houses of the Congress,
there were four major differences between the House bill and the Senate bill -

1) The method of financing and loan.

2) Repayment in specifically named materials.

3) The use of funds for the purchase of grains only in the U.S.

4) The Mundt Amendment for the use of interest payments for an educational exchange program between the United States and India.

As to the financing of the loan, the Senate provision was agreed to. It provided that at least 100 million dollars of the loan funds would come from funds already appropriated to ECA. The remaining 90,000,000 dollars would come from ECA funds as were unallocated and unobliged, as of June 30, 1951. If the amount available as of June 30, 1951, was less than $90,000,000 the balance would be raised by self generating public transactions.

As the repayment in strategic materials and the question of specifying certain strategic materials, but the materials were not specified. Third, the Conference Report contained the House Provision that the loan funds shall be used only for the purchase of foodgrains in the United States. The Senate receded on this point.

Fourth, was the difference as to the Mundt Amendment on this point the Senate receded from its position and the House Amendment was accepted. Under the terms of this amendment, on the loan of $190 million with an interest rate of two and half percent, and interest payments
beginning on July 1, 1952, the funds available for this program could amount to $23,000,000 under the terms of the Mundt Amendment. The House Conference agreed to accept the Senate proposals with other modifications and a ceiling of $5,000,000 on this program. The House passed the Conference Report with 225 yeas, 82 nays, 95 not voting. The Report was thus agreed to in the House. The Senate too passed it.

Summing up the debate on the bill, the Speaker Sam Rayburn, referred to the interacting groups in the United States, which tried to delay the passage of the bill. "When the question first arose, I found few, if any, people against even a gift or grant. As things went on the ball began to roll and certain influences began to work".

Press reactions in the United States towards India Emergency Assistance Act of 1951, were in general favourable. On the whole, the leading American newspapers strongly supported speedy action on the bill. The general trend in the American press indicated that the food situation in India offered an opportunity to promote the national interest of the United States. Urging aid to India despite differences, the New York Times, 9 February 1951, in an editorial as printed in the Congressional Records 97, 1951-1236 commented that Nehru’s China policy should not be a factor in the consideration of famine relief to India. "There is no connection between the two facts; Mr. Nehru is, we believe, wrong; his people need the grain we can easily send and should have it".
After the President had transmitted his recommendation to the Congress, the American press was consistently bringing pressure upon the Congress for speedy action. The leading papers warned the Congress against playing politics with food. The American press, in general, extended full support to the bill. A larger section of the press favoured an unconditional gift, and urged assistance to India despite foreign policy differences.

There was nation-wide support from various kinds of groups, for the emergency assistance legislation for India. The strongest argument of the advocates was that of national interest. They argued that the passage of the bill would promote the national interest of the United States; as it would be significant factor in founding goodwill for the United States in India. Some other groups favoured assistance to India on purely humanitarian grounds. They made the issue one of the duty of men more fortunately placed to relieve human misery elsewhere. Some groups while advocating aid to India on humanitarian grounds, demanded that some qualifications be made to the legislation or some conditions be attached to the bill.

In an hour dire necessity the basic principles of India’s foreign policy were challenged. Non-alignment dictated that it should not accept food with conditions. To clarify its stand, India objected to the Senate Bill in which an attempt had been made to specify the strategic materials which India could supply to the United States by way of part-repayment of the loan. Similarly the first
The Soviet Offer of 50,000 tons of wheat in exchange for raw jute was unacceptable to India because India could not spare that commodity at that time.

The passage of the India Emergency Assistance Act of 1951 was a landmark in the relations of the United States Government with the new Republic of India. This was the first time when the American Administration took a keen interest in India's problems and actively urged the United States Congress to take a quick action, and urged private organizations to send emergency aid to India. It was realized that political and economic stability in India, the largest working democracy in Asia, was a factor of importance for American Security and world peace.

The logjam in the Congress by mid-April had been broken because of Administration's pressure. Finally hearings on the India Food grain bill were opened on April 16 by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The Committee favourably reported the bill on April 20, following the forceful testimony of Acheson and other Administration spokesmen. The Senate bill was a compromise version. The new bill called for a $95 million grant and a $95 million loan, unlike the legislation offered on February 15, which called for a grant, or gift, or $190 million to India to purchase the requisite two million tons of grain. The terms for repayment were to be determined subsequently by the Economic Cooperation Administration, which was to oversee the program.41
The Agreement of the controversial legislation was also reached in the House Rules Committee. On April 24, following a seven week deadlock, that Committee approved a bill that would provide the entire $190 million amount as a loan; the loan would be partially repayable in strategic materials, this compromise measure was almost identical to the minority report offered earlier by Vorys and supported by only four of the House Foreign Affairs Committee’s members. When informed by the Rules Committee Chairman that no other version would be allowed to reach the House floor, the Chairman of that Committee, John Kee, reluctantly accepted the amended bill. He stated it "does not reflect my views personally nor those of the majority of the committee", but was being offered solely "as a last resort because it will do more good than nothing". Finally, the bills were being prepared for discussion by the full Senate and House of representatives.\[42\]

India resentment with the glacial pace of the American legislative process was growing apace as the food situation was steadily deteriorating. At this juncture two new hurdles cropped up. The first concerned the level of supervision provided for in these draft bills. In language standard for any U.S. aid program, both explicitly called for an ECA mission to supervise the distribution process. The prospect of a "foreign agency" controlling India’s grain...
distribution system or its development plans irked Nehru. He wrote to Ambassador Pandit in Washington, the proposed legislation amounted "practically to converting India into some kind of a semicolonial country or at least a satellite in the economic sense.... I realize completely the consequence of our refusal of this gift. Nevertheless I cannot bring myself to agree to this final humiliation". To their American counterparts, Indian officials in both New Delhi and Washington quickly conveyed their Prime Minister’s objections. Madame Pandit expressed Indian concern that an ECA mission charged with supervision of the grain distribution would infringe upon Indian sovereignty, in a meeting at the State Department on April 14. She went on to say that the bills provision of a U.S. voice in determining the use of counterpart funds - funds raised as a result of the sale of U.S. grains - might be construed as giving the United States a voice in all the India’s development plans. In New Delhi Bajpai told Henderson that for India to accept these provisions would be "politically extremely difficult". At the very time when Washington was doing its most to alleviate the present food crisis, the U.S. Ambassador retorted, India was seeing the bill in the worst possible light and was "making mountains out of mole hills".43

A more complex problem soon emerged: the question of Indian repayment in strategic materials, although reassurances from American representatives temporarily did
soothe Indian sensitivities about these matters. To the United States, India was already exporting substantial quantities of manganese, mica, and beryl. India had embargoed in 1946, the export of monazite sand. Monazite sand when processed, yield not only rare earth compounds but thorium, a chemical element labelled as a source material for atomic energy by the Atomic Energy Act of 1946. India’s publicly stated intention was to refine the monazite sand through its own infant processing industry, then to sell the refined rare earth compounds to the United States while retaining the thorium for its own purpose. To break the Indian embargo on the sale of its valuable monazite sand, several Congressmen and Senators, in both open and closed hearings, suggested strongly that the United States use the proposed wheat loan. That India was concerned with the inclination of some U.S. representatives to interject this factor into the wheat bill hearings, was told to Henderson on April 22 by Bajpai. He cautioned, that the Indians would resist any U.S. effort to pressure them on this subject. The issue was brought to a head because of the provisions of the House bill of April 24, which explicitly called for repayment in strategic materials, although unspecified.

Nehru vented his frustrations in two widely publicised statements. Increasingly angered by what he viewed as American attacks on India sovereignty, he declared
on April 29 that Congressional conditions for the transfer of American grain were unacceptable to India. He said, "India is not so down and out as to accept any condition dictated by any foreign country in the matter of importing food that sullies our honour". He was even more forthright in a speech broadcast over All India radio on May 1:

"While we welcome all the help we can get from foreign countries, we have made it clear that such help must not have any political strings attached to it, any condition which is unbecoming for a self-respecting nation to accept, any pressure to change our domestic or international policy. We would be unworthy of the high responsibilities with which we have been charged if we bartered away in the slightest degree our country's self-respect or freedom of action, even for something which we need so badly".45

To Nehru's outbursts the Congressional response was swift. As a result action on the India aid bill was postponed on May 2 by both the Houses of the Congress. Representative Lawrence N. Smith explained flatly that as a result of Nehru's remarks "The temper of the House is no - go for the India bill". The NEW YORK TIMES reporter was told that the bill had been put into a "deep freeze", perhaps permanently, by another Congressman, who insisted that his name not be used.46

The State Department officials repeatedly tried to impress upon Indian representatives the seriousness of this latest outburst. They demanded that Nehru should clarify his position in a public statement. Henderson told Nehru, at a social occasion in New Delhi, that his decision on the
proposed wheat loan would have "far-reaching effects" not only on U.S.-Indian relations but on India's economy as well. Nehru relented, facing an increasingly bleak economic situation. He stated before Parliament on May 10 that India would agree to the terms of either the House of Senate bills, but would prefer the simpler terms of the House bill, which put the program entirely on a loan basis. With regard to the troublesome issue of strategic materials, he said that India would gladly supply those materials that were available and could be spared, but emphasized that it was a fundamental principle of the Indian government not to supply material to foreign governments that might be used in the production of atomic weapons. Thus, the possibility of India removing its embargo on the sale of monazite sand was implicitly ruled out by him.47

Events moved rapidly on Capitol Hill, following Nehru's conciliatory statement. With H. Alexander Smith and several of his colleagues eloquently arguing in favour of the measure, the Senate on May 14 reopened debate on the India aid bill. The proposed $190 million aid program was approved two days later. The Senate legislation placed the whole program on a loan basis, consistent with the inclinations expressed by Nehru in his speech of May 10. However, there was one major sticking point. The upper chamber also adopted an amendment offered by three
conservative Republicans that called for repayment in specific strategic materials, including monazite sand. For the purchase of food grains, the House adopted a measure on May 24 which also called for repayment in strategic materials, it carefully avoided specifying those materials. By adopting a measure that essentially followed the outlines of the more judicious House bill, a House-Senate Conference committee worked out the differences between the two bills. On June 6 the House passed the Conference bill; five days later the Senate approved the legislation. Calling the aid bill a "generous gesture" that would "bring the two people nearer". Nehru promptly expressed his pleasure with the U.S. action.

The wheat loan legislation was formally signed by President Truman on June 15. He proclaimed, "This kind of help to stricken humanity is a tradition of the American people". Two months later the first American aid shipment reached India, with Indian leaders again effusively praising American generosity in a brief ceremony.
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