

Truman's speech outlining the policy known as the **TRUMAN DOCTRINE**, Presidential address to congress (3-12-1947)

[INTRODUCTION] The gravity of the situation which confronts the world today necessitates my appearance before a joint session of the Congress. The foreign policy and the national security of this country are involved. One aspect of the present situation, which I wish to present to you at this time for your consideration and decision, concerns Greece and Turkey. The United States has received from the Greek Government an urgent appeal for financial and economic assistance... I do not believe that the American people and the Congress wish to turn a deaf ear to the appeal of the Greeks...

[I GREECE] Greece is not a rich country. Lack of...resources has always forced the Greek people to work hard... Since 1940 [they] suffered invasion... enemy occupation... internal strife... Germans destroyed virtually all the railways, roads, port facilities, communications... More than 1,000 villages had burned. 85% of the children were tubercular. Livestock, poultry, & draft animals had almost disappeared. Inflation had wiped out practically all savings. As a result of these tragic conditions, a militant minority, exploiting human want and misery, was able to create political chaos... Greece is today without funds ...[and]... cannot make progress in...reconstruction. Greece is in desperate need of... assistance to...purchase...food, clothing, fuel and seeds... Greece must have help to import the goods necessary to restore internal order and security, so essential for economic & political recovery.

The Greek Government has also asked for...American administrators, economists and technicians to insure that the...aid given to Greece shall be used effectively in creating a stable, self-sustaining economy and in improving its public administration. [They are]... threatened by... terrorist activities of several thousand armed men, led by Communists, who defy the government... The Greek army is small and poorly equipped. It needs supplies and equipment... to restore the authority of the government...Greece must have assistance if it is to become a self-supporting and self-respecting democracy.

The United States must supply that assistance. We have already extended to Greece certain types of relief and economic aid but these are inadequate. There is no other country to which democratic Greece can turn. The British Government, which has been helping Greece, can give no further financial or economic aid after March 31. Great Britain finds itself under the necessity of reducing or liquidating its commitments in several parts of the world, including Greece. We have considered how the United Nations might assist in this crisis. But the situation is an urgent one [and a UN resolution would not be suitable].

...It is of the utmost importance that we supervise the use of any funds made available to Greece; in such a manner that each dollar spent will count toward making Greece self-supporting, and will help to build an economy in which a healthy democracy can flourish. No government is perfect. One of the chief virtues of a democracy, however, is that its defects are always visible and under democratic processes can be pointed out and corrected. The Government of Greece is not perfect. Nevertheless it represents 85% of the members of the Greek Parliament who were chosen in an election last year. Foreign observers, including 692 Americans, considered this election to be a fair expression of the views of the Greek people. The Greek Government has been operating in an atmosphere of chaos and extremism. It has made mistakes. The extension of aid by this country does not mean that the United States condones everything that the Greek Government has done or will do. We have condemned in the past, and we condemn now, extremist measures of the right or the left. We have in the past advised tolerance, and we advise tolerance now.

[II TURKEY] Greece's neighbor, Turkey, also deserves our attention. The future of Turkey as an independent and economically sound state is clearly no less important to the freedom-loving peoples of the world than the future of Greece. The circumstances in which Turkey finds itself today are considerably different from those of Greece. Turkey has been spared the disasters that have beset Greece. And during the war, the United States and Great Britain furnished Turkey with material aid. Nevertheless, Turkey now needs our support. Since the war Turkey has sought financial assistance from Great Britain and the United States for the purpose of effecting that modernization necessary for the maintenance of its national integrity. That integrity is essential to the preservation of order in the Middle East. The British government has informed us that, owing to its own difficulties can no longer extend financial or economic aid to Turkey. As in the case of Greece, if Turkey is to have the assistance it needs, the United States must supply it. We are the only country able to provide that help. I am fully aware of the broad implications involved if the United States extends assistance to Greece and Turkey, and I shall discuss these implications with you at this time.

[III RATIONALE] One of the primary objectives... is [that] we and other nations will be able to work out a way of life free from coercion. This was a fundamental issue in the war with Germany and Japan. Our victory was won over countries which sought to impose their will, and their way of life, upon other nations.

To ensure the peaceful development of nations, free from coercion, the United States has taken a leading part in establishing the United Nations. The United Nations is designed to make possible lasting freedom and independence for all its members. We shall not realize our objectives, however, unless we are willing to help free peoples to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes... Totalitarian regimes imposed on free people, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine... international peace and hence the security of the U.S.

...The world has recently had totalitarian regimes forced upon them against their will. [We have] made frequent protests against coercion & intimidation, in violation of the Yalta agreement, in Poland, Rumania, and Bulgaria. I must also state that in a number of other countries there have been similar developments.

...Nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one. One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression. The second [way of life] is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio; fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms. I believe that it must be [our] policy... to support free peoples who are resisting... armed minorities or by outside pressures. I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way. I believe that our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid which is essential to economic stability and orderly political processes...

It is necessary only to glance at a map to realize that the survival and integrity of the Greek nation are of grave importance in a much wider situation. If Greece should fall under the control of an armed minority, the effect upon its neighbor, Turkey, would be immediate and serious. Confusion and disorder might well spread throughout the entire Middle East. Moreover, the disappearance of Greece as an independent state would have a profound effect upon those countries in Europe whose peoples are struggling against great difficulties to maintain their freedoms and their independence while they repair the damages of war. It would be an unspeakable tragedy if these countries, which have struggled so long against overwhelming odds, should lose that victory for which they sacrificed so much. Collapse of free institutions and loss of independence would be disastrous not only for them but for the world... Should we fail to aid Greece and Turkey in this fateful hour, the effect will be far reaching to the West as well as to the East. We must take immediate and resolute action.

[IV PROPOSAL] I ask the Congress to provide [\$400 million]... for assistance to Greece & Turkey... In addition to funds, I ask the Congress to authorize the detail of American civilian and military personnel to Greece and Turkey, at the request of those countries, to assist in the tasks of reconstruction, and for the purpose of supervising the use of such financial and material assistance as may be furnished. I recommend that authority also be provided for the instruction and training of selected Greek and Turkish personnel. Finally, I ask that the Congress provide authority which will permit the speediest and most effective use, in terms of needed commodities, supplies, and equipment, of such funds as may be authorized. If further funds, or further authority, should be needed for purposes indicated in this message, I shall not hesitate to bring the situation before the Congress. On this subject the Executive and Legislative branches of the Government must work together. This is a serious course upon which we embark. I would not recommend it except that the alternative is much more serious. The United States contributed \$341 billion toward winning World War II. This is an investment in world freedom and world peace. The assistance that I am recommending for Greece and Turkey amounts to... 0.01% of this investment. It is only common sense that we should safeguard this investment and make sure that it was not in vain. The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want. They spread and grow in the evil soil of poverty and strife. They reach their full growth when the hope of a people for a better life has died. We must keep that hope alive...

- 1) List 10 factors that contributed to the desperate situation in 1947 Greece (Section I): _____

- 2) Besides money, what else does the Greek government request? (Section I) _____

- 3) Why is the United States the only hope for Greece, as opposed to Great Britain or the United Nations? (Section I) _____

- 4) Why does Truman consider the Greek government flawed, and what does he recommend for their future leadership? (Section I) _____

- 5) If Turkey had been spared the World War II disasters the came to Greece, why is the nation still in need of aid? (Section II) _____

- 6) What is the purpose of aiding Greece and Turkey? (Section III) _____

- 7) How does Truman find parallels between the current situation with the Soviets and the World War II situation with Germany and Japan? (Section III) _____

- 8) When Truman mentions that, "every nation must choose between alternative ways of life", what characteristics describe the first way of life? (Section III) _____

- 9) When Truman mentions that, "every nation must choose between alternative ways of life", what characteristics describe the second way of life? (Section III) _____

- 10) If Greece and Turkey were to fall under Soviet influence, what consequences does Truman envision? (Section III) _____

- 11) What amounts of money is involved in this request, and how does it compare to the cost of World War II? (Section IV) _____

12) Describe the symbols used and the overall meaning of the political cartoon...


