

The Truman Doctrine: America's Entrance into the Cold-War

Allison Cook

Abstract

When Britain withdrew aid from the Greek and Turkish Governments during the Greek Civil War, President Truman delivered the Truman Doctrine before Congress in an attempt to provide the aid that the British were unable to continue. He did this in an effort to prevent the communist insurgents from securing power, as well as to stop communism from spreading from the Eastern Bloc. This paper explores three political cartoons that were published during this incident, and how they indicate the public's perception of the civil war in Greece leading up to and during the early days of the Cold War.

The Truman Doctrine: America's Entrance into the Cold-War

The Cold War was a conflict between the United States, who championed democracy and capitalism, and the Soviet Union, who supported communism. This doctrine, delivered on March 12, 1947, sought to provide \$400 million in aid to the Greek and Turkish governments to secure democracy in Greece and prevent the spread of communism to the rest of the world (National Archives, 2022). There was no shortage of comments that surfaced during the Greek conflict; often these comments took the form of political cartoons in newspapers, including the "Path to Peace," "Two Birds with One Stone," and "Two Washington Comments on the Truman Doctrine."

Figure 1. Path to Peace



Clifford K. Berryman. *The Evening Star*, August 27, 1946

Several months prior to the release of the Truman Doctrine, a cartoon called "Path to Peace" was released in *The Evening Star*, which illustrates the United States'

view of the events in the Greek Civil War. There was a strong belief that Stalin and the Soviet Union were responsible for the communist uprising in Greece; however, this belief was a false one, as the communists in Greece were acting on their own accord (Herring, 2008, p. 597). It also demonstrates the American perception that Stalin cares little for the Greeks so long as he can enhance his own sphere of influence. The Americans were correct in the belief that Stalin had little investment in the war, as 6 months after the Truman Doctrine was issued, he withdrew Soviet aid (Herring, 2008, p. 617).

Figure 2. Two Birds with One Stone

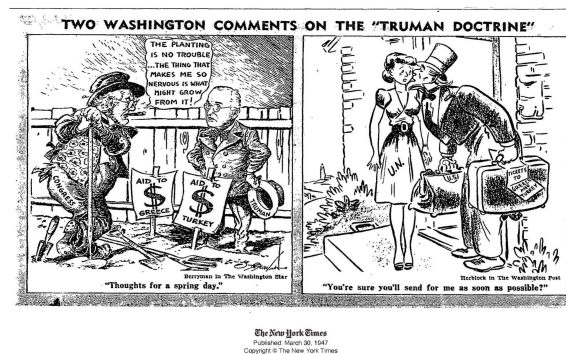


The New York Times, March 23, 1947

When “Two Birds with One Stone” appeared in the New York Times, the Truman Doctrine had already been addressed to Congress. The cartoon takes a rather positive stance towards the president’s request by utilizing a well-known idiom. The casting of Communism as equal to

“Threat to a Brave People” demonstrates just how poorly the United States viewed the Communist ideology and its spread. The aid that the U.S., or “Uncle Sam,” is launching at the “vultures” is intended to not only ensure the threat of communism in Greece is taken care of (the brave people), but also that communism is contained and not allowed to spread, thus taking care of two problems with one policy.

Figure 3. Two Washington Comments on the “Truman Doctrine”



The New York Times, March 30, 1947.

While the previous cartoon held a positive view of the Truman Doctrine, “Two Washington Comments on the Truman Doctrine” was less favorable. The artist demonstrates the different views that Americans held toward the aid. There is a sense that the Congress is perhaps overindulgent, and rather lazy in comparison to Truman, who had just taken productive action to “plant” the aid. Alternatively, Truman’s posturing can reflect that of an individual who acted quickly and without thinking through consequences, only to be irritated that someone questioned him. There was also the issue of the doctrine bypassing the UN, an issue that did not sit well with many senators who felt that aid needed to be

channeled through the UN (Edwards, 1988-89, p. 151).

The second illustration demonstrates how the US is overshadowing the UN by making the decisions. By placing the UN in a subordinate position, the cartoon made a point that the US should reconsider bypassing the UN. Alternatively, it can be interpreted as the UN being a weak institution.

Conclusion

The cartoons discussed in this paper each discuss the public perception of the events during the Greek Civil War, its relationship to the Cold War, and how the Truman Doctrine played a role. The perception among individuals varied, though, ultimately the Senate passed the Greek-Turkish aid with an overwhelming majority (Edwards, 1988-89, p. 151).

References

Berryman, Clifford K. (1946, August 27). Path to Peace. *The Evening Star*.

Edwards, Lee. (1988-89). Congress and the origins of the Cold War: The Truman Doctrine.

World Affairs, 151(3), 131-141.

Herring, George C. (2008). *From colony to superpower: U.S. foreign relations since 1776*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc.

National Archives. (2022). Truman Doctrine (1947). National Archives. Retrieved from <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/truman-doctrine>

New York Times. (1947, March 23). Two birds with one stone. *The New York Times*.

New York Times. (1947, March 30). Two Washington comments on the Truman Doctrine. *The New York Times*.

Recommended Citation

Cook, A. (2023). *The Truman Doctrine: America's Entrance into the Cold-War. Made in Millersville Journal*, 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.mimjournal.com/history-2023>