

Truman vs. MacArthur

Part A.

Directions: Read the following documents, and summarize the content of each one.

Document 1

Statement by President Harry S. Truman on the Violation of the 38th Parallel in Korea (June 26, 1950)

... In accordance with the resolution of the Security Council, the United States will vigorously support the effort of the Council to terminate this serious breach of the peace. Our concern over the lawless action taken by the forces from North Korea, and our sympathy and support for the people of Korea in this situation, are being demonstrated by the cooperative action of American personnel in Korea, as well as by steps taken to expedite and augment assistance of the type being furnished under the Mutual Defense Assistance Program.

Document 2

Cabinet Meeting with President Truman (June 30, 1950)

[President Truman] wanted all of the gentlemen present to know . . . that what we had done was being done under the auspices of the United Nations; and that offers of help which had come from countries like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand of sending military forces to help General MacArthur were being made for the United Nations. . . . Senator Connally then said that he was pleased that the President was permitting American forces to operate when necessary north of the 38 degree parallel. . . . Senator Connally said he wanted every other nation to understand very clearly that MacArthur was the boss [of all military forces]. . . . The President pointed out that we had not yet committed any troops to actual combat and that our present plan was just to send base troops to Pusan to keep communications and supply lines open. . . . Senator Gurney said he hoped the Administration realized that we must completely support the Southern Koreans. Now that we were in this, there could be no backing down. . . .

Document 3

Message to General Douglas MacArthur from the Joint Chiefs of Staff (July 31, 1950)

In accordance with previously-approved long-range plans, formulated prior to the Korean incident, for dispersed storage of non-nuclear components for atomic bombs, 10 such components will be placed in storage on Guam. . . . Shipment of nuclear components, requiring 72 hours, plus Presidential decision authorizing use would be necessary before atomic bombs could be employed.

Sources: Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, *The Korean War and Its Origins, 1945-1953* (http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/index.php); *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Harry S. Truman, 1945-1953* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1966); *A Soldier Speaks: Public Papers and Speeches of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965).

Document 4

Statement Regarding Formosa Sent by General MacArthur to the Veterans of Foreign Wars for Use at the VFW's 51st Encampment (August 17, 1950)

Nothing could be more fallacious than the threadbare argument by those who advocate appeasement and defeatism in the Pacific that if we defend Formosa we alienate continental Asia. Those who speak this do not understand the Orient. They do not grasp that it is in the pattern of oriental psychology to respect and follow aggressive, resolute and dynamic leadership. . . . Nothing in the last five years has so inspired the Far East as the American determination to preserve the bulwarks of our Pacific Ocean strategic position from future encroachment. . . . To pursue any other course would be to turn over the fruits of our Pacific victory to a potential enemy. . . .

Document 5

Message to General MacArthur from the Secretary of Defense (August 26, 1950)

The President of the United States directs that you withdraw your message for National Encampment of Veterans of Foreign Wars, because various features with respect to Formosa are in conflict with the policy of the United States and its position in the United Nations.

Document 6

Message to the Joint Chiefs of Staff from General MacArthur (September 15, 1950)

Late in the afternoon troops of the First Marine Div, which this morning captured Wolmi-Do, landed on the beach of Inchon, after heavy Naval and air preparation, successfully landed on the beach of Inchon itself and the beach to the south. They rapidly overcame light resistance and are consolidating the beachhead. . . . The whole operation is proceeding on schedule.

Document 7

Message to General MacArthur from the Joint Chiefs of Staff (September 16, 1950)

The JCS have noted the following press dispatch:
 "With invasion fleet off Korea—General MacArthur hopes that the invasion of Korea at Inchon will save 100,000 American lives. . . ."

Document 8

National Security Council Report 81, "United States Courses of Action with Respect to Korea" (September 1, 1950)

... The political objective of the United Nations in Korea is to bring about the complete independence and unity of Korea in accordance with the General Assembly resolutions of November 14, 1947, December 12, 1948, and October 21, 1949.

... It would not be in our national interest, however, nor presumably would other friendly members of the United Nations regard it as being in their interest, to take action in Korea which would involve a substantial risk of general war. ...

Document 9

Message to the Joint Chiefs of Staff from General MacArthur (September 28, 1950)

... If the North Korean Armed Forces do not surrender in accordance with my proclamation to be issued 1st October 1950, dispositions will be made to accomplish the military objective of destroying them by entry into North Korea. ...

Document 10

President Truman's Outline for the Meeting with General MacArthur at Wake Island (October 13, 1950)

We must do everything we can to localize the conflict in Korea. Politically, we must assure the Chinese and the Soviets that they are not being threatened militarily in Korea but we must also keep before them the recklessness of active intervention on their part. ...

Document 11

Notes on the Meeting between President Truman and General MacArthur at Wake Island (November 25, 1950)

The General assured the President that the victory was won in Korea, that Japan was ready for a peace treaty and that the Chinese Communists would not attack.

A general discussion was carried on about Formosa. The General brought up his statement to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, which had been ordered withdrawn by the President. The General said that he was sorry for any embarrassment he'd caused, that he was not in politics at the time. ...

Document 12

President Truman's Radio Report to the American People on Korea and on U.S. Policy in the Far East (April 11, 1951)

In the simplest of terms, what we are doing in Korea is this: We are trying to prevent a third world war.

I think most people in this country recognized that fact last June. And they warmly supported the decision of the Government to help the Republic of Korea against the Communist aggressors. Now, many persons, even some who applauded our decision to defend Korea, have forgotten the basic reason for our action.

It is right for us to be in Korea now. It was right last June. It is right today. . . . The question we have had to face is whether the Communist plan of conquest can be stopped without a general war. Our Government and other countries associated with us in the United Nations believe that the best chance of stopping it without a general war is to meet the attack in Korea and defeat it there.

That is what we have been doing. It is a difficult and bitter task.

But so far it has been successful. . . . So far, by fighting a limited war in Korea, we have prevented aggression from succeeding, and bringing on a general war. And the ability of the whole free world to resist Communist aggression has been greatly improved. . . .

We do not want to see the conflict in Korea extended. We are trying to prevent a world war—not to start one. And the best way to do that is to make it plain that we and the other free countries will continue to resist the attack.

But you may ask why can't we take other steps to punish the aggressor. Why don't we bomb Manchuria and China itself? Why don't we assist Chinese Nationalist troops to land on the mainland of China?

If we were to do these things we would be running a very grave risk of starting a general war. If that were to happen, we would have brought about the exact situation we are trying to prevent. If we were to do these things, we would become entangled in a vast conflict on the continent of Asia and our task would become immeasurably more difficult all over the world.

What would suit the ambitions of the Kremlin better than for our military forces to be committed to a full-scale war with Red China? . . . I believe that we must try to limit the war to Korea for these vital reasons: to make sure that the precious lives of our fighting men are not wasted; to see that the security of our country and the free world is not needlessly jeopardized; and to prevent a third world war.

A number of events have made it evident that General MacArthur did not agree with that policy. I have therefore considered it essential to relieve General MacArthur so that there would be no doubt or confusion as to the real purpose and aim of our policy.

It was with the deepest personal regret that I found myself compelled to take this action. General MacArthur is one of our greatest military commanders. But the cause of world peace is much more important than any individual. . . .

The struggle of the United Nations in Korea is a struggle for peace.

The free nations have united their strength in an effort to prevent a third world war.