

The Application of the Monroe Doctrine to
the Venezuela Boundary Question,
by
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The Application of the Monroe Doctrine to the Venezuela Boundary Question.

by

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The end of the nineteenth century marks the close of one of the most useful periods in the history of the world.

Beginning with the achievements of Bonaparte it has witnessed the unbroken triumphs of Von Moltke, the tremendous strength displayed in our Civil War, and the organization and regular employment of the entire fighting strength of nearly every nation of Europe.

The colonization movements of the sixteenth century were feeble and insignificant as compared with the grasping and out-reaching march of the European nations of today. As a result of this movement we find nearly every European nation with outlying colonies, at the present time in a state of warfare with their subjects; Italy in Abyssinia, France in Soudan, Spain in Cuba, Russia extending her dominion over Turkey, and England in Transvaal and Venezuela, the latter arising over the payment of an indemnity for the expulsion of a British Minister from what England claimed as British territory, and brought up the dispute of the red question, the boundary line between Venezuela and British Guiana.

England was prepared to enforce her demands by force of arms, and nations waited patiently for the subjugation of the plucky little country, when the whole world was electrified by President Cleveland's message to Prime Minister Salisbury, informing him of the fact that the United States would enforce the Monroe Doctrine in the fullest sense of the word.

The principles involved in the Monroe Doctrine are as old as the nation itself; the surrounding conditions under which this country came into existence were such that the general belief became prevalent that the interests of the United States would best be subserved by a complete severance from foreign politics, that no independence would not be safe when we became involved in international affairs.

Thus from one of the fundamental principles of this government, namely the non-interference in European politics, was slowly evolved the principle that there should be no interference by European powers on this continent.

To give President Monroe the honor of originating this great principle is taking a narrow view of the subject; great national policies are not enacted in the spur of the moment, but are the result of an evolutionary process, whereby the public is educated up to a sufficiently high standard to understand and appreciate such a declaration as a fixed national policy. The people united by 1823 was sufficiently prepared to welcome the official utter-

ance of a principle that had grown up in the minds of the people as a natural result of an evolutionary process.

President Monroe simply became the exponent of this policy. He had the necessity of perception to understand the point to which the public mind had silently and unconsciously grown, and had the courage when the time arrived, to declare it as the foreign policy of this government.

The Monroe Doctrine is founded on certain declarations, contained in President Monroe's message to Congress which assembled December 1st, 1823.

It occurs in the message with relation to the controversy between the United States and Russia regarding our North West boundary, and while commenting on this question President Monroe adds; "In the discussion to which this interest has given rise, and the arrangements in which it may terminate, the occasion has been judged a proper one for asserting as a principle, where the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American Continent by the free and independent condition that it has asserted and maintained, is henceforth not to be considered as a subject for future colonization by any European power."

In the latter part of the message is found another declaration addressed to the foreign powers. After reciting at some length our foreign policy, the protection

of our rights, and the actions of the Allied Powers, he further adds; "We owe it therefore to the candor and amicable relations between the United States and those powers to declare, that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere, as dangerous to our peace and safety. With existing colonies and dependencies of any European power, we have not interfered and shall not interfere, but with governments who have declared their independence and maintained it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and just principle acknowledged, we could not view any interposition of any European power for the purpose of controlling them or in any manner unless this availing, in any other light than as a manifestation of an unfriendly disposition towards the United States."

In a later message to Congress 1824, President Monroe refers to the matter again in a very emphatic manner, regarding the action of Spain, after hostilities had ceased in the war between Spain and her colonies.

"Separated as we are from Europe by the great Atlantic Ocean, we can have no concern in the wars of European governments or the causes which produce them. The balance of power between them cannot affect us. It is to the best interest of the United States to preserve the most friendly relations possible with every power, and

on conditions fair, equal and applicable to all. But in regard to our neighbors the situation is different, it is impossible for European powers to interfere with their governments without affecting us, indeed the motive which might induce interference in the present state of war, if war it may be called, would appear to be equally applicable to us."

These two passages quoted, appearing in separate messages of President Monroe, which yet considered as one, are in reality two separate declarations applicable to two separate circumstances.

The first passage refers to European colonization, stating that the American continent is not to be considered as a subject for future colonization. The second refers to the interference of European powers in the politics of the independent American states.

On September 25, 1715, the Emperors of Austria and Russia and the King of Prussia concluded a treaty known as the Holy Alliance, whose aim it was to administer to the governments both internal and external, and to aid each other in times of need.

In April, 1823, France, acting upon this plan of the allies invaded Spain for the purpose of restoring Ferdinand VII to the throne. Before the end of the summer the allies gave Great Britain notice of a congress to be held with a view of ending the Revolutionary Governments in

Spanish America. At this time George Canning was in control of the British Foreign Affairs. England had great commercial interests in Spanish America that would be entirely destroyed by this interposition. The United States and England thus had interests nearly identical, and during the latter part of the summer Canning proposed to our Minister to England, Mr Rush, the advisability of the two governments making a joint declaration against the interposition of the Allied Powers in the Affairs of Spanish America.

This proposal was duly reported to our government and was viewed with favor by many members of the cabinet. Jefferson^{and} Madison were strongly in favor of it, while Adams thought we should act with England only on a basis of the acknowledgement by England of the independence of the Spanish American States.

England did this without waiting for an interview with the French Ambassador. Canning declared that Great Britain would remain neutral in any war between Spain and her colonies, but the junction of a foreign power with Spain in such a war, would constitute a new question upon which Great Britain must take such action as her interests might require.

This declaration complied with the Monroe Doctrine completely ruined the prospects of the Holy Alliance and put an end to their projected American Conquest.

Thus we see the history of the formation of the Monroe Doctrine, a principle conceived in England and born in the United States.

It is highly probable that to President Monroe's mind the message had served its purpose, that of thwarting the designs of the Holy Alliance, and was practically dead, yet is such the case? Cannot we trace a distinct line of ancestry from the original Monroe Doctrine down to the last application in the Venezuela Boundary Question.

For years previous to this last application the Monroe Doctrine had lain practically dormant, it is true that in a few cases such as Guatemala, British Honduras, Mexico, and others, the principle had been asserted, yet on the whole we may say it has been practically a dead letter, and while we have recognized it as the fundamental basis of our foreign policy, we have not made any practical demonstration of it save and except the ones previously mentioned.

With the message of President Cleveland and Secretary Olney, a new field was opened, a new phase added to the category of things prohibited, and an almost an entirely new construction placed on the message.

According to the President Cleveland and Secretary Olney, the message to England issued by them is but an expansion of the doctrine originally enunciated by President Monroe; that as times change, condit-

ions change also, and as the original Monroe Doctrine was issued to fulfill a want and ward off a danger of that time, so was the present message issued to fulfill a want and ward off a danger that now threatens us.

England concedes the right of the United States to enforce the Monroe Doctrine, but says that the interference of the United States in a boundary dispute between two separate and independent nations, is an interference uncalled for and one that can in no way be connected with the application of the Monroe Doctrine.

Here is where the two conflicting opinions meet, England on one hand contending that the United States has no authority and the United States on the other hand contending that it has.

The principal argument presented by England in justification of her position is that the Monroe Doctrine does not apply to the present case, arguing that the present dispute does not in any way infringe upon the declarations of the Monroe Doctrine that there should be no further colonization in America, and that European nations should not extend their systems any further upon this continent, and by holding to this view they do not intend it as an attempt to advance their frontier border, claiming that the boundary established by Schomburgk is the right and lawful line separating the two countries of

Venezuela and British Guiana. The British have effectually occupied the territory east of the Schomburgk line and have forty thousand subjects there, and refuse to submit this area east of the line to arbitration and thus expose these British subjects to the risk of being turned over to a government frequently disturbed by revolutions, and totally inadequate to insure the life, liberty and property of these subjects. England is perfectly willing to submit her claims, west of the Schomburgk line, to a proper tribunal.

The United States on the other hand contends that the course pursued by this government is not an interference and is in direct line with the principles so firmly planted by the Monroe Doctrine. The subject is best summed up in the words of Secretary Olney.

1. The title to the territory of indefinite but confessedly large extent is in dispute between Great Britain and Venezuela.
2. The disparity in strength of the parties is such that Venezuela can only hope to establish her claims by peaceful methods.
3. The controversy has existed for a half a century despite Venezuela's efforts to establish a boundary.
4. Venezuela has for a quarter of a century striven for arbitration.
5. Great Britain has continuously refused except upon the renunciation in her favor of a large part of Venezuela's claim.
6. The United States has made it clear to Great Britain

and to the world, by frequent interposition of good offices, that the controversy is one in which the honor and interests of this government is involved, and the continuance of which cannot be regarded with indifference.

A point conceded in international law is that the United States has a right like any other nation to interfere in any controversy in which their own interests are affected and they themselves are to judge whether those interests are touched and in what measure they should be sustained.

As a means of safety, President Monroe in 1823 issued his memorable message, and the addition by President Cleveland and Secretary Olney is but a further development of that message to protect us from foreign aggression. President Monroe's Message prohibited colonization and extension of their imperious system, and President Cleveland and Secretary

Olney simply develop the idea a little farther and say that no foreign power can acquire new territory on this continent either by gift, purchase or voluntary transfer. Here seems to be clearly shown the relationship between the two messages.

The interests of the United States are affected in more ways than one, and such being the case we are justified in taking the course by us deemed most advisable.

Aside from our commercial interests which are of great value, the feeling of right, justice, and duty to protect the weak and at the same time protect ourselves is acknowledged.

These are a few of the factors that induced President Cleveland to issue his memorable message to Congress, and later as a means of reforming the United States of the principal features of the case urged Congress to appropriate \$100,000 to pay the expenses of a Venezuela Commission to be appointed by the President. Congress took prompt action and the Commission as appointed consists of the following members - David J. Brewer of Kansas, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, President; Richard H. Avery of Maryland, Chief Justice of the Court of Appeals; Andrew D. White of New York, ex-President of Cornell University; Frederick R. Condit of New York, Counsel for the United States in the Beiney Sea Arbitration; David C. Gilman of Maryland, President of Johns Hopkins University.

The object of the Commission is to determine for the United States with sufficient certainty for its justification, what is the true divisional line between the Republic of Venezuela and British Guiana. The inquiry to that end to be conducted carefully and judiciously and due weight to be given to all available evidence.

records, and facts, in support of the claims of both parties.

When the Commission reports and the report is accepted, it will be the duty of the United States to resist by every means in her power any aggressions by the English upon any land, determined by the United States to belong to Venezuela.

The committee appointed by the President is composed of wise, eminent and patriotic men, but however near and the time for the Commission to report there will be a dark cloud of uncertainty hanging over both nations, an uncertainty liable to be fitfully aggravated on occasions, or even without occasion, by speculating manufactures of rumors, the critical moment will come when the Commission reports.

Whether or not the contention justifies the causation of the unsettled conditions of today is a question yet to be determined, one thing we may truthfully say that President Cleveland and Congress as a representative of the people of the United States have the endorsement and support of America to back up the stand they have taken.

This application of the Monroe Doctrine, does not, as it has been said imply a protectorate by the United States over all the South American Republics, we interfere only in-so-far as our own intimate

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interest and national honor is concerned.

The United States is the first government to decline to establish a protectorate or maintain distant colonies, and is the first nation to follow the principle of absolute non-interference in the affairs of countries of the other hemisphere.

Whatever European countries do to each other we leave for them to arrange, we draw the line exactly where it existed when President Monroe made his memorable declaration, and where we believe it should exist today.

We are not concerned with the usurpations in Europe or any other country of the Eastern Hemisphere where the United States is not directly interested, but we cannot permit that the possessions of independent governments of America either north or south, shall either by negotiation or conquest become subject to European domination.

The British flag today floats over three million five hundred thousand square miles of territory in America and here the line must stop.

The experiment of a Republican form of government, now in its second century, is entitled to have and should have its full development and operation on this continent. The American Republic as the pioneer, and as the typical government in which the people are

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sovereign, has the right to protect itself against the encroachment of foreign and adverse powers in such a manner as is reasonable and just.

We do not claim that the world is ours, but we insist upon our right to be consulted upon affairs pertaining to the American continent.

We do not go around the world begging for struggling nations to set free, but we recognize in a degree the relationship to the South American Republics, whose independence like ours has long been recognized by foreign powers, and we cannot sit indifferently by and see the territorial integrity of any of these countries questioned, and we will make it our business to see that their possessions are not materially curtailed.

Prior to 1823 certain rights had accrued to foreign powers and domination had been exercised by them over certain territory on our border, but since that time we have not consented to any intrusion of that domination.

We have reached a time when it becomes our duty as a nation to say to the world with dignity and firmness that thus far but no farther shall foreign systems of governments be permitted to approach.

That our foreign doctrine is the Monroe Doctrine, our policy the American policy, our principle the protection of American interests, our motto America for Americans.