

## CHAPTER IX

### THE MONROE DOCTRINE

IN the foregoing chapters we have discussed the origin and the more important applications of the Monroe Doctrine. There remain, however, certain general aspects of the subject which require special consideration. In any discussion of the Monroe Doctrine it is important to bear in mind that it was in its origin and has always remained purely an executive policy. Neither house of Congress has ever expressly sanctioned the language of President Monroe or attempted to formulate a new definition of the policy. On January 20, 1824, a few weeks after Monroe's famous message, Henry Clay made an effort to get Congress to endorse the policy announced by the executive, but his resolution was tabled.<sup>1</sup> In 1856 Senator Clayton, who as secretary of state had negotiated the Clayton-Bulwer treaty, declared that he would be willing to vote to assert the Monroe Doctrine and maintain it, but that he would "not expect to be sustained in such a vote by both branches of Congress. Whenever the attempt has been made to assert the Monroe Doctrine in either branch of Congress, it has failed." And he added, "You cannot prevail on a majority, and I will venture to say that you cannot prevail on one-third, of either house of Congress to sustain it."<sup>2</sup> In fact, the Monroe Doc-

<sup>1</sup> Moore, "Digest of International Law," Vol. VI, p. 404.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 427.

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trine never received anything approaching legislative sanction until 1895, when, in response to President Cleveland's message on the Venezuelan boundary dispute, Congress appropriated \$100,000 to pay the expenses of the commission which he proposed to appoint.

For nearly a hundred years we have successfully upheld the Monroe Doctrine without resort to force. The policy has never been favorably regarded by the powers of continental Europe. Bismarck described it as "an international impertinence." In recent years it has stirred up rather intense opposition in certain parts of Latin America. Until recently no American writers appear to have considered the real nature of the sanction on which the doctrine rested. How is it that without an army and until recent years without a navy of any size we have been able to uphold a policy which has been described as an impertinence to Latin America and a standing defiance to Europe? Americans generally seem to think that the Monroe Doctrine has in it an inherent sanctity which prevents other nations from violating it. In view of the general disregard of sanctities, inherent or acquired, during the past few years, this explanation will not hold good and some other must be sought. Americans have been so little concerned with international affairs that they have failed to see any connection between the Monroe Doctrine and the balance of power in Europe. The existence of a European balance of power is the only explanation of our having been able to uphold the Monroe Doctrine for so long a time without a resort to force. Some one or more of the European powers would long ago have stepped in and called our

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bluff, that is, forced us to repudiate the Monroe Doctrine or fight for it, had it not been for the well-grounded fear that as soon as they became engaged with us some other European power would attack them in the rear. What other satisfactory explanation is there for Louis Napoleon's withdrawal from Mexico, for Great Britain's backdown in the Venezuelan boundary dispute, and for the withdrawal of the German fleet from Venezuela in 1902?

While England has from time to time objected to some of the corollaries deduced from the Monroe Doctrine, she has on the whole been not unfavorably disposed toward the essential features of that policy. The reason for this is that the Monroe Doctrine has been an open-door policy, and has thus been in general accord with the British policy of free trade. The United States has not used the Monroe Doctrine for the establishment of exclusive trade relations with our Southern neighbors. In fact, we have largely neglected the South American countries as a field for the development of American commerce. The failure to cultivate this field has not been due wholly to neglect, however, but to the fact that we have had employment for all our capital at home and consequently have not been in a position to aid in the industrial development of the Latin-American states, and to the further fact that our exports have been so largely the same and hence the trade of North and South America has been mainly with Europe. There has, therefore, been little rivalry between the United States and the powers of Europe in the field of South American commerce. Our interest has been political rather than commercial. We have prevented the es-

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establishment of spheres of influence and preserved the open door. This situation has been in full accord with British policy. Had Great Britain adopted a high tariff policy and been compelled to demand commercial concessions from Latin America by force, the Monroe Doctrine would long since have gone by the board and been forgotten. Americans should not forget the fact, moreover, that at any time during the past twenty years Great Britain could have settled all her outstanding difficulties with Germany by agreeing to sacrifice the Monroe Doctrine and give her rival a free hand in South America. In the face of such a combination our navy would have been of little avail.

Contrary to a widely prevailing opinion the Monroe Doctrine has undergone very little change since the original declaration, and the official statements of the doctrine have on the whole been very consistent. The only important extension was made less than two years after the original declaration, when, in October, 1825, Secretary Clay, acting under the direction of President John Quincy Adams, who assisted in formulating the doctrine, notified the French government that we could not consent to the occupation of Cuba and Porto Rico "by any other European power than Spain under any contingency whatever." Similar declarations were made to the other European powers, the occasion being the fear that Spain would transfer her sovereignty over these islands to some other government. President Monroe had declared that the American continents were closed to colonization from Europe, meaning by colonization very probably, as Professor John Bassett

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Moore says, "the acquisition of title to territory by original occupation and settlement."<sup>3</sup> He had made no declaration against the transfer of sovereignty in America from one European power to another. In fact he positively renounced any such idea, when he said: "With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power we have not interfered, and shall not interfere." Here, then, within two years we have a distinct advance upon the position taken by President Monroe. Yet this advanced ground was held by succeeding administrations, until President Grant could say in the case of the same islands in his first annual message:

These dependencies are no longer regarded as subject to transfer from one European power to another. When the present relation of colonies ceases, they are to become independent powers, exercising the right of choice and of self-control in the determination of their future condition and relations with other powers.<sup>4</sup>

And Secretary Hamilton Fish said a few months later that the President had but followed "the teachings of all our history" when he made this statement.<sup>5</sup>

The failure of Blaine and Frelinghuysen to oust Great Britain from her interests in the canal under the Clayton-Bulwer treaty by an appeal to the Monroe Doctrine and the successful enforcement of the doctrine by President Cleveland and Secretary Olney in 1895 have been discussed at sufficient length in previous chapters. While the policy of Cleveland and

<sup>3</sup> *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. XI, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> "Messages and Papers of the Presidents," Vol. VII, p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> *Foreign Relations*, 1870, pp. 254-260; Moore, "Digest of International Law," Vol. VI, p. 431.

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Olney was vehemently denounced at the time, it is now generally approved by American writers of authority on international law and diplomacy.

When President McKinley decided to demand from Spain the cession of the Philippine Islands, the opposition that the step encountered was based to some extent on the fear that it would amount to a repudiation of the Monroe Doctrine, that if we invaded the Eastern Hemisphere we could not expect to keep Europe out of the Western. The use of the term hemispheres in connection with the Monroe Doctrine has, of course, been merely a figure of speech. The Monroe Doctrine dealt with the relations between Europe and America, and Eastern Asia never came within its purview. As a matter of fact, the Monroe Doctrine has been more fully and more frequently asserted since the acquisition of the Philippines than ever before. The participation of the United States in the First Peace Conference at The Hague was taken by many Americans to mark the end of the old order and the introduction of a new era in American diplomacy, but, contrary to their expectations, this meeting was made the occasion for an emphatic and effective declaration before the assembled body of European nations of our adherence to the Monroe Doctrine. Before the Convention for the Pacific Settlements of International Disputes was adopted, the following declaration was read before the conference and the treaty was signed by the American delegates under this reservation:

Nothing contained in this convention shall be so construed as to require the United States of America to depart from its traditional policy of not intruding upon, interfering

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with, or entangling itself in the political questions or policy or internal administration of any foreign state; nor shall anything contained in the said convention be construed to imply a relinquishment by the United States of America of its traditional attitude toward purely American questions.<sup>6</sup>

Prior to the Roosevelt administration the Monroe Doctrine was regarded by the Latin-American states as solely a protective policy. The United States did not undertake to control the financial administration or the foreign policy of any of these republics. It was only after their misconduct had gotten them into difficulty and some foreign power, or group of foreign powers, was on the point of demanding reparation by force that the United States stepped in and undertook to see to it that foreign intervention did not take the form of occupation of territory or interference in internal politics. The Monroe Doctrine has always been in principle a policy of American intervention for the purpose of preventing European intervention, but American intervention always awaited the threat of immediate action on the part of some European power. President Roosevelt concluded that it would be wiser to restrain the reckless conduct of the smaller American republics before disorders or public debts should reach a point which gave European powers an excuse for intervening. He held that since we could not permit European powers to restrain or punish American states in cases of wrongdoing, we must ourselves undertake that task. As long as the Monroe Doctrine was merely a policy of benevolent protection, which Latin-American states could invoke after their unwise or evil conduct had

<sup>6</sup> "Treaties and Conventions of the United States" (Compiled by W. M. Malloy), vol. II, p. 2032.

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brought European powers to the point of demanding just retribution, it was regarded with favor and no objection was raised to it; but the Roosevelt declaration, that if we were to continue to protect Latin-American states against European intervention, we had a right to demand that they should refrain from conduct which was likely to provoke such intervention, was quite a different thing, and raised a storm of criticism and opposition.

The Roosevelt interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine was undoubtedly a perfectly logical step. It was endorsed by the Taft administration and has been extended by the Wilson administration and made one of our most important policies in the zone of the Caribbean. President Roosevelt was right in drawing the conclusion that we had arrived at a point where we had either to abandon the Monroe Doctrine or to extend its application so as to cover the constantly increasing number of disputes arising from the reckless creation of public debts and loose financial administration. It was absurd for us to stand quietly by and witness the utterly irresponsible creation of financial obligations that would inevitably lead to European intervention and then undertake to fix the bounds and limits of that intervention. It is interesting to note that President Wilson has not hesitated to carry the new policy to its logical conclusion, and he has gone so far as to warn Latin-American countries against granting to foreign corporations concessions which, on account of their extended character, would be certain to give rise to foreign claims which would, in turn, give an excuse for European intervention. In discussing our Latin-American policy

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shortly after the beginning of his administration, President Wilson said:

You hear of concessions to foreign capitalists in Latin America. You do not hear of concessions to foreign capitalists in the United States. They are not granted concessions. They are invited to make investments. The work is ours, though they are welcome to invest in it. We do not ask them to supply the capital and do the work. It is an invitation, not a privilege, and the states that are obliged because their territory does not lie within the main field of modern enterprise and action, to grant concessions are in this condition, that foreign interests are apt to dominate their domestic affairs—a condition of affairs always dangerous and apt to become intolerable. . . . What these states are going to seek, therefore, is an emancipation from the subordination which has been inevitable to foreign enterprise and an assertion of the splendid character which, in spite of these difficulties, they have again and again been able to demonstrate.

These remarks probably had reference to the oil concession which Pearson & Son of London had arranged with the president of Colombia. This concession is said to have covered extensive oil interests in Colombia, and carried with it the right to improve harbors and dig canals in the country. However, before the meeting of the Colombian Congress in November, 1913, which was expected to confirm the concession, Lord Cowdray, the president of Pearson & Son, withdrew the contract, alleging as his reason the opposition of the United States.

Prior to the Great War, which has upset all calculations, it seemed highly probable that the Platt Amendment would in time be extended to all the weaker states within the zone of the Caribbean. If the United States is to exercise a protectorate over such states, the right

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to intervene and the conditions of intervention should be clearly defined and publicly proclaimed. Hitherto whatever action we have taken in Latin America has been taken under the Monroe Doctrine,—a policy of doubtful legal sanction,—which an international court might not recognize. Action under a treaty would have the advantage of legality. In other words, the recent treaties with Caribbean states have converted American policy into law.

The imperialistic tendencies of our Caribbean policy, whether they be regarded as logical deductions from the Monroe Doctrine or not, have undoubtedly aroused the jealousies and fears of our Southern neighbors. One of the results has been the formation of the so-called A B C Alliance, based on treaties between Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, the exact provisions of which have not been made public. This alliance doubtless serves a useful purpose in promoting friendly relations between the three great states of South America, and since the acceptance of the mediation of these powers in Mexico by President Wilson there is no reason to regard it as in any sense hostile to the United States. While the United States may very properly accept the mediation of other American states in disputes like that arising out of the Mexican situation, the United States would not feel under any obligation to consult other American states or accept their advice on any question involving the enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine. The United States has always maintained the Monroe Doctrine as a principle of self-defense, and, consequently, on its own authority. In 1825 the Brazilian government proposed that the United States should enter into an alliance with

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it in order to maintain the independence of Brazil in case Portugal should be assisted by any foreign power in her efforts to reconquer Brazil. Secretary Clay replied that while President Adams adhered to the principles set forth by his predecessor, the prospect of peace between Portugal and Brazil rendered such an alliance unnecessary.<sup>7</sup>

In recent years the proposal has been more than once made that the Monroe Doctrine be Pan Americanized. This proposal was discussed by Mr. Root in his address before the American Society of International Law in 1914 in the course of which he said:

Since the Monroe Doctrine is a declaration based upon this nation's right of self-protection, it cannot be transmuted into a joint or common declaration by American states or any number of them. If Chile or Argentina or Brazil were to contribute the weight of its influence toward a similar end, the right upon which that nation would rest its declaration would be its own safety, not the safety of the United States. Chile would declare what was necessary for the safety of Chile. Argentina would declare what was necessary for the safety of Argentina. Brazil, what was necessary for the safety of Brazil. Each nation would act for itself and in its own right and it would be impossible to go beyond that except by more or less offensive and defensive alliances. Of course such alliances are not to be considered.<sup>8</sup>

President Wilson in his address before the Second Pan American Scientific Congress in 1916 agreed in part with this when he said: "The Monroe Doctrine was proclaimed by the United States on her own authority. It has always been maintained, and always will be maintained, upon her own responsibility."

<sup>7</sup> Moore, "Digest of International Law," Vol. VI, p. 427.

<sup>8</sup> "Addresses on International Subjects," Elihu Root, p. 120.

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The relation of the Monroe Doctrine to the Declaration of Rights and Duties of Nations, drafted by the American Institute of International Law, was discussed by Mr. Root in his address before the American Society of International Law in 1916. He said in part:

Whether the United States will soon have occasion or will long have the ability or the will to maintain the Monroe Doctrine lies in the uncertain future. Whether it will be necessary for her to act in defense of the doctrine or abandon it, may well be determined by the issue of the present war. Whether when the occasion comes she will prove to have the ability and the will to maintain the doctrine, depends upon the spirit of her people, their capacity for patriotic sacrifice, the foresight and character of those to whose initiative in foreign affairs the interests of the people are entrusted. Whether the broader doctrine affirmed by the American Institute of International Law is to be made effective for the protection of justice and liberty throughout the world depends upon whether the vision of the nations shall have been so clarified by the terrible lessons of these years that they can rise above small struggles for advantage in international affairs, and realize that correlative to each nation's individual right is that nation's duty to insist upon the observance of the principles of public right throughout the community of nations.<sup>9</sup>

It is not probable that our participation in the Great War will result in any weakening of the Monroe Doctrine. That principle has been fully justified by a century of experience. It has saved South America from the kind of exploitation to which the continents of Africa and Asia have, during the past generation, fallen a prey. It would be strange indeed if the

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<sup>9</sup> "Addresses on International Subjects," by Elihu Root, p. 425.

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United States, having insisted on the non-interference of European powers in America when it was itself a weak power from the military point of view, should now in the plenitude of its power relax what has been for so many years the cardinal principle of its foreign policy. The abandonment of our policy of neutrality and isolation does not by any means mean the abandonment of the Monroe Doctrine. President Wilson made this quite clear in his address to the Senate on January 22, 1917, when he said:

I am proposing, as it were, that the nations should with one accord adopt the doctrine of President Monroe as the doctrine of the world; that no nation should seek to extend its polity over any other nation or people, but that every people should be left free to determine its own polity, its own way of development, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid, the little along with the great and powerful. I am proposing that all nations henceforth avoid entangling alliances which would draw them into competitions of power, catch them in a net of intrigue and selfish rivalry, and disturb their own affairs with influences intruded from without. There is no entangling alliance in a concert of power.

The policy of isolation or the avoidance of entangling alliances, which so many Americans confuse with the Monroe Doctrine, is in principle quite distinct from it and is in fact utterly inconsistent with the position and importance of the United States as a world power. The difference in principle between the two policies can perhaps be best illustrated by the following supposition. If the United States were to sign a permanent treaty with England placing our navy at her disposal in the event of attack from some European power, on condition that England would unite with us in oppos-

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ing the intervention of any European power in Latin America, such a treaty would not be a violation of the Monroe Doctrine, but a distinct recognition of that principle. Such a treaty would, however, be a departure from our traditional policy of isolation, originally announced by Washington and Jefferson.

The participation of the United States in the League of Nations would, if that League be considered an entangling alliance, be a departure from the policy of isolation but not a violation of the Monroe Doctrine. In order to allay the fears of Americans on this point, President Wilson caused to be inserted in the constitution of the League of Nations the following clause:

Nothing in this Covenant shall be deemed to affect the validity of international engagements, such as treaties of arbitration or regional understandings like the Monroe Doctrine, for securing the maintenance of peace.

This clause did not serve the purpose for which it was intended, and a heated controversy at once arose as to the meaning of the language employed. When the treaty came before the Senate this clause was the object of attack, and Senator Lodge included among the fourteen reservations which he proposed the following one on the Monroe Doctrine:

The United States will not submit to arbitration or to inquiry by the assembly or by the council of the League of Nations, provided for in said treaty of peace, any questions which in the judgment of the United States depend upon or relate to its long-established policy, commonly known as the Monroe Doctrine; said doctrine is to be interpreted by the United States alone and is hereby declared to be wholly outside the jurisdiction of said League of Nations and en-

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tirely unaffected by any provision contained in the said treaty of peace with Germany.

The recognition of the Monroe Doctrine by the League of Nations, taken in connection with the Senate's assertion of the exclusive right to interpret its meaning, has caused some of the Latin-American countries to delay joining the League until the Monroe Doctrine is clearly defined. In February, 1920, Salvador brought this subject to the attention of the United States in a formal note in which she argued that, as the Monroe Doctrine was so variously interpreted by prominent thinkers and public men even in the United States, it should be officially defined.<sup>10</sup> In reply Salvador was referred to what President Wilson had said on the subject of the Monroe Doctrine in his address of January 6, 1916, before the Pan American Scientific Congress at Washington.<sup>11</sup> These remarks have already been quoted in Chapter VIII.<sup>12</sup> Salvador was informed that no further definition was deemed necessary. The speech referred to may, therefore, be considered the latest official interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine.

<sup>10</sup> *The New York Times*, February 8, 1920.

<sup>11</sup> *The New York Times*, March 2, 1920.

<sup>12</sup> *Antc.*, pp. 306-307.

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