

**A Political Bloodbath in the Western Hemisphere:  
How Bolivarianism is Sentencing the Monroe Doctrine to Death**

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**Abstract**

The present paper discusses the general political and diplomatic conduct in the Western Hemisphere. Starting from the Monroe Doctrine which stipulated that the Western Hemisphere is US sphere of influence and control and laid the ground for several other policies including expansionism, interventionism, isolationism and territorialism. However, this doctrine has come toe to toe with another rising ideology, Bolivarianism. This ideology was resurrected from the ideals and thoughts of Simon Bolivar, the liberator of Latin America, to confront the longstanding Monroe Doctrine using different policies mainly populism. Over the course of the last two decades a battle of political domination and hegemony has been undergoing between the Bolivarianism and the US with the involvement of extra-hemispheric actors who were elicited by the weakening doctrine. Eventually, the US had to change its foreign policy rhetoric vis-à-vis Latin America.

**ملخص**

يناقش هذا المقال الوضع السياسي و الدبلوماسي في نصف الكرة الغربي. بدأ من مبدأ مونرو الذي يقتضي أن نصف الكرة الغربي يخضع فقط لسلطة و تأثير الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. هذا المبدأ مهد لسياسات أخرى نذكر منها سياسة التوسعية، التدخلية، سياسة العزلة و سياسة التبعية. لكن هذا المبدأ دخل في مواجهة سياسية مع إيديولوجية صاعدة، البوليفارية. هذه الإيديولوجية التي بعثت من مبادئ و أفكار سيمون بوليفار، محرر أمريكا اللاتينية، بدأت بمواجهة مبدأ مونرو بسياسات مختلفة أهمها الشعبوية. خلال العشرينيتين، نشبت معركة سيطرة و هيمنة سياسية بين الولايات المتحدة و البوليفاريين واشترك في هذا الصراع قوى من خارج نصف الكرة الغربي الذين أغواهم ضعف مبدأ مونرو وسقوطه. في نهاية المطاف اضطرت الولايات المتحدة لتغيير خطابها السياسي فيما يتعلق بأمريكا اللاتينية.

**Introduction**

For over 5000 years, thinkers, kings and even average men have been desperately trying to ponder a suitable method or mechanism to govern other humans. Although all of them share the same goal and answer the same question of how to rule humans? Their footsteps on the slippery floor of political struggles have left very unique patternson the parchments of human political thought and reserved an everlasting dwelling in history'shall of fame. Their tremendous impact on human life is undeniably still blatant until our present day. Yet, although nobody ever succeeded to uncork thisHoly Grailof entirely subduing humans

and constructing the perfect system of rule and control, many of them managed to build milestones in the history of man. And though, history has not judged these great thinkers and will not; men across the ages and cultures simply refer to them as liberators and incarcerators.

The narrative of the main incarcerator in this paper is astonishing. James Monroe, the fifth President of the United States and the last of the founding fathers, ultimately upheld the Declaration of Independence of 1776 which means he strongly believed in the Immortal Declaration which stated that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” To some, this was a solemn pride to have so bravely defended the precious idea of liberty and self-rule. Indeed, although his bravery earned him a musket bullet in the shoulder during the American Revolution, he kept pace with his ideals of liberty and patriotism. All these facts makes us contemplate the question of how such an ideal of liberty and self-determination issued a doctrine that turned the entire Western Hemisphere into a blindfolded hostage which was kept in infancy with regard to international political, cultural and economic arenas?

On the other hand, the narrative of the liberator in this paper share many traits with James Monroe. Simon Bolivar the Liberator, or as Latin American people hailed him El Libertador, was a political and military genius. He guided five countries to independence from Spanish rule. But unlike James Monroe, who grew up as an orphan living the ordeals of poverty, Simon Bolivar was born to a wealthy family and was sent to Europe for education. His revolutionary ideas were greatly inspired by the French Revolution of 1789. Like Monroe, though, he was a strong advocate of liberty and self-determination. And even though Bolivar and Monroe lived almost in the same era and endured similar upheavals and beheld the changing world around them, they never crossed each other's path. However, that is not applicable to their legacies which were and still are changing the conduct of diplomacy, economy and democracy in the Western Hemisphere. For while Monroe left the Western Hemisphere enchained with a rusty iron chain in the depths of US prisons, Bolivar's heritage, which was transformed into an ideology in recent decades, is breaking the loops of that chain one by one and exiling the oldest milestone of US foreign policy to oblivion.

### **The road to the Monroe Doctrine**

It is indeed worth noting that America was once a country built upon moral ideals by people who escaped misery, oppression and persecution. However, in this dog-eat-dog world one can only imagine what it takes for such a common man to survive and even if he did survive, his ideals and idealism would not. That is exactly the case of James Monroe. He was a decedent of a Scottish immigrant, orphan at the age of fifteen, rallied to the cause of revolution at the age of seventeen (Levy, 2014). Throughout his political career, Monroe's value was never unduly estimated, not only for his fervor in living up to his ideals of freedom and nationalism, but also for his brilliance in politics. By the age of fifty nine he became the fifth president of the United States serving two consecutive terms from 1817 to 1825. His era was called the Era of Good Feelings and it was labeled as such because during this era the American Nation developed a sense of national purpose and unity. This label captured the good spirit of political harmony forged by the decline of sectionalism and the rise of the roaring pride of American Nationalism among the people (Goldfield, Abbott, & Anderson, 2011).

Despite Monroe's inexorable meteoric rise to power, he never lost sight of his core politics that without secure borders and friendly relationships with neighboring countries, America and the Americans could never truly be safe. But storms then shook the ocean of his friendly politics and it was time for him to ride the tide of conflict with European traditional colonial powers who were desperately exerting their power and influence in a hemisphere where the U.S. should have been the only puppeteer. Monroe's battles were not fought only with guns, barricades and frigates but also with diplomacy. Monroe, the last of the founding fathers and a vivid supporter of liberty and self-determination, was aware of the revolutionary battles south the borders, mainly in Latin America. The idea of liberty has stirred Latin American people to reclaim liberty of Spanish colonizers at the barrel of a gun. Their inspirational battle of freedom led by the military genius Simon Bolivar, hailed as El Libertador or the Liberator, earned them independence from European powers and formal recognition from the United States (Robertson, 1995).

The United States' diplomacy during post-revolution years was still infantile. It has not matured until James Monroe and his Secretary of State John Quincy Adams shifted it to a more prominently engaging level, especially in the Western Hemisphere. James Monroe, who for years amassed a wealth of diplomatic and political experiences and unleashed the spirit of American expansionism westward, had now to pour all his efforts to oust Europeans from the Western Hemisphere and refute all their claims vis-à-vis territories therein. Thus, the independence of Latin American countries while it was met by recognition, it was also met by an amphibious ideological trend in US foreign policy; the Monroe Doctrine.

The Monroe Doctrine was first established by President Monroe in an annual address to the Congress. He stated that "...the occasion has been judged proper for asserting, as a principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers..." (Chaffin, 2014, p. 13). Monroe wanted to assert that European powers' territorial claims in the Western Hemisphere are now past, now there is a new map of power and hegemony in the hemisphere. The United States is thus painting the legends of that map with red, blue and white. The Monroe Doctrine did not only assert US influence and control on the Western Hemisphere but also stipulated that any further efforts by European nations to colonize land or interfere with states in North or South would be regarded as an act of aggression against the United States itself (Kaufman, 2014).

At first, Latin American people viewed this policy as a blessing or more as a glimpse of hope, that they finally will have a partner in region who is strong enough to counter balance and prevent the belligerent European colonizers from entering the Western Hemisphere. Nevertheless, the Doctrine had a more sinister threat up its sleeves. It actually marked the era of continental American Expansionism. It made it clear that the United States wanted to expand on its own continent, and the only real hindrance which is now cleared of the way was the European powers (p. 40). Moreover, the Doctrine had another imperialistic invasive interpretation that Latin American country must respect: these principles laid down by Monroe and must not in any way attempt to elicit the presence of extra-hemispheric actors in the Western Hemisphere. This meant that political, diplomatic, economic and cultural

conducts of Latin American countries were subject to scrutiny and filtration by the United States.

Simon Bolivar had already warned of this doctrine that it was an evil in disguise and indeed his grim warning proved prescient. In his famous Letter from Jamaica he described the atmosphere in Latin America and stressed the need of uniting Latin American countries, not only to counterbalance European powers but also to counterbalance unpredictable hegemonic leviathan. He wrote "How different is our situation! We have been harassed by a conduct which has not only deprived us of our rights but has kept us in a sort of permanent infancy with regard to public affairs." (Fitzgerald, 1971, p. 34). Simon Bolivar's mistrust of the American foreign policy was not exaggerated. The proof for Latin Americans that the Monroe Doctrine was not there to protect them from European colonizers but to protect US interests and open the gate for American continental expansion came crawling in 1902 during the Venezuela crisis.

The incident of 1902 ensued when President of Venezuela Cipriano Castro refused to pay foreign debts and damages to European Powers. The Venezuelan President assumed that the longstanding Monroe Doctrine will protect his country from aggression and prevent any probable military intervention to enforce European claims. However, that was not the case at all, for while the United States refused any military intervention or use of force, it backed European claims and meddled in the crisis and pressured the Venezuelan Government settle European claims and pay its debts off (Rose, Newton, Dodwell, & Benians, 1967). In time, this action of the American Government, carried out by its President Theodore Roosevelt came to be known as the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. This corollary stipulated that even if the dispute between Europeans and Latin American countries is not of territorial nature but rather economic; the use of power is not and will not be permitted. Moreover, such dispute can only be resolved through the proper channels which the United States deem fit.

Throughout the past two hundred years, US troops have been mobile and restless in the Western Hemisphere in the name of the Monroe Doctrine. The doctrine has been interpreted differently each time to suit the circumstances and to salvage US interests. In some situations, the doctrine was used to refute European claims and oust them off the Western Hemisphere which gives it the sense of Territorialism; such is the case of the Cuban Missile Crisis. In other situations, the doctrine was merely a tool of asserting US Continental Expansionism, meaning it was used to annex new territories like Texas and Hawaii. The doctrine also have dictated an isolationism trend to Latin American countries, that is they cannot host military bases or engage in any activity with extra-hemispheric actors that might constitute a threat to US interest, especially military or cultural exchange with states that are in odds with the US. However, in its broader explicit senses, the doctrine manifested the proper sense of interventionism, prevention and national interest, as it was used to justify the military interventions in Latin American countries to simply overthrow governments that do not have the interest of the US in heart and setup puppet governments which is the case of Mexico in 1865, Guatemala in 1954, Chile in 1973, Venezuela in 2002 and the list goes on (Sulichin, 2009).

Therefore, any careful examination of US foreign policy and diplomacy must be done in the light of the Monroe doctrine because it has been the cornerstone of all proceeding

foreign policies. All US presidents have invoked the Monroe Doctrine whether to ensure the continuous safety of US interests in the Western Hemisphere or to remove a potential threat. And although, James Monroe contemplated the idea that his annual message to the Congress in 1823 will ensure the Americans' safety and freedom by the banishing the European colonizers and opportunists from the Western Hemisphere, he probably never anticipated that this message will actually deprive the Latin American people who were fighting the same battle of freedom from their life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. And like the former Nicaraguan President Violeta Chamorro put it "Washington politicians could always find money for wars in Latin America - but rarely for peace" (Analysis: How the US 'lost' Latin America, 2006).

### **The Rise of Bolivarianism: Colliding legacies?**

The term Bolivarianism brings us back to the narrative of the liberator in this paper, Simon Bolivar. In its immediate definition, it simply connotes the legacy and ideals of El Libertador Simon Bolivar, and that is why it was named after him. But Bolivarianism is more than that actually. Its broader definition means the set of political doctrines that encompasses political and economic sovereignty of Latin America, economic self-sufficiency, participative democracy, patriotism and the unification of Latin America (Angosto-Ferrández, 2015, pp. 2-3). The roots of Bolivarianism or the Bolivarian ideals which is the legacy of Simon Bolivar are a reflection of the ideals of the French Revolution "Liberty! Equality! Fraternity!" but forged in Latin American context and flavored with condiments of Anti-imperialism.

Nevertheless, Simon Bolivar did not live to see his dreams of a unified free Latin America come true. He died in exile choking off on his idealism and ideals of liberty. But nothing was meant to disappear forever. After almost two centuries of his death, his legacy was resurrected by the late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez who proclaimed the Bolivarian Revolution. Chavez a national hero who had already attempted a *coup d'état* against the pro-US government of Carlos Andrés Pérez who, according to Chavez, proved by the deteriorating economic atmosphere of Venezuela, was dismantling the country and impoverishing the people of Venezuela with his neoliberal approaches (Gott, 2011). Though Chavez failed in his attempt to overthrow Pérez's government, he was portrayed as a national hero who has a heart for the people of Venezuela. Suddenly, Chavez shifted from that unknown military officer to a prominent figure in Venezuelan politics. His name has become synonymous with his ideal: Bolivar.

The recourse of Chavez's election and re-election as president of Venezuela and his success as a rising meteor in the world of politics was not merely due to his Bolivarian ideals but also from his populist background. He knew that populism in Latin America would be of unprecedented triumph. Thus in his first inaugural address as president of Venezuela he said "this power which you all have given me doesn't belong to me, this is your power, you elected a government that will not be a government of Chavez because Chavez is the people, it will be a government of the people." (Sulichin, 2009). This idea is not new for the sphere of politics of Latin America. Che Guevara the Argentine Marxist revolutionary, guerrilla leader, diplomat, and military theorist stated in revolution context that "Liberators do not exist. The people liberate themselves." He simply meant that the forces of the people can put in place the conditions that make revolution and those called liberators are just a tool for the mobilization of the dispersed power of the people (Kelly, 2013, pp. 312-313).

This model of populist resurgence molded with a Bolivarian forefront of Venezuela became very popular and appealing among Latin Americans. Therefore, similar figures from other Latin American Countries decided that it was time to keep pace with Chavez's anti-imperialistic revolution and join the tide of Bolivarianism. And so, Bolivarianism spread across Latin America and in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Chavez managed not only to diffuse his motto of Bolivarian revolution but also to establish consensus among the leaders of Latin American Countries and convince them with the necessity of breaking out from the hegemony of the United States. The list of Bolivarians who came to power in Latin America comprises Evo Morales of Bolivia, Nestor Kirchner and his Wife Cristina Kirchner of Argentina, Luis Lula Da Silva of Brazil, Fernando Lugo of Paraguay, Rafael Correa of Ecuador, Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua, and the list goes on. Yet, while they refer to themselves as Bolivarians, the media refer to them as "the pink tide" as a reference of describing the perception of leftist ideology in general, and left-wing politics in particular in Latin American context.

The pink tide did not always remain a tide, it has turned into a raging stream of anti-imperialism views and policies. Chavez has started a new era in Latin America and now, the longstanding status of US prestigious stand in Latin America, or its backyard as the US politicians call it, is at stake. In 2009, during the Fifth Summit of the Americas, the Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez offered the United States President Barack Obama a copy of a book "*Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*," written by the Uruguayan Author Eduardo Galeano. The book discusses the history of Latin America, from the European settlements of the New World to contemporary Latin America, arguing against the exploitation and political hegemony imposed on Latin America from the era of discovery to the era of superpowers. While the torrents of riches and gold, extracted from Latin America, were flowing into Europe and the United States, Latin America sank more and more in poverty and economic disparity. It was a candid statement that US pillage of Latin America has come to an end, and the Bolivarians are hammering the last nails into the coffin of the Monroe Doctrine.

Bolivarian hostilities towards the United States are very much comprehensible. After years of Washington dictates and choosing for Latin American even persecuting them it was time to vanquish US death grip on Latin American governments and institutions. And what helped the process is that US was busy fighting wars outside the Western Hemisphere under the cloak of anti-terrorism. Simon Bolivar's dream is now turning to reality and Latin America is being unified not only politically speaking but also economically. They have reached a high degree of collaboration to build a shared market, use common currency and even sign mutual defense treaties (USA International Business Publications, 2009).

However, the United States attempted to halt this liberation process and again invoking the interventionist side of the Monroe Doctrine in Venezuela in 2002. Nevertheless, this time the United States did not dispatch or stage an assassination because Latin America of 1954 and 1973 is no longer the same as in 2002, because populism was in play and in favor of President Chavez, not to mention the public awareness of US tactics. So the United States used another important tool to overthrow the democratically elected government of Chavez and stage a successful coup d'état and this tool was the Media. It was the first media coup d'état in history. Private media manipulated footage of shootings at an unarmed anti-Chavez

protest claiming it was Chavistas, Chavez supporters who are killing innocent people in the name of Bolivarianism and in the same time broadcasting an army general, Nestor Gonzales demanding Chavez to step down or otherwise he will be removed by force. The US staged coup was executed as planned and Chavez was taken prisoner to a remote place where he was being forced to sign a resignation to fulfill Washington urges (Golinger, 2007). Nevertheless, the overwhelming power of populism restored Chavez and the story of the coup was thoroughly reported on a documentary entitled *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*, with particular focus on the subversive role played by the private media which at the time was controlled by pro-US interests and corporate elite.

The process of loosening Latin America from the rusty iron chain of the Monroe Doctrine was long and laborious and its more evolved proceeding was hosting and welcoming with open arms extra-hemispheric actors mainly China and Iran which was the straw that broke the camel's back. For almost two centuries, no power from outside the Western Hemisphere had the distinct privilege to conduct its affairs therein freely, especially those countries labelled by the United States as rogue states or part of the Axis of Evil. And what encouraged these extra-hemispheric actors, who were seeking to reduce the isolationism imposed on them by the US especially Iran, was US preoccupation of protecting its interests outside the Western Hemisphere and focusing its attention and power to fight on several fronts in the Middle East and Asia. Besides, that the acquiescence of Latin American countries to involve extra-hemispheric actors in Western Hemisphere affairs was mainly to dismantle the Monroe Doctrine, counterbalance US power and hegemony in the region, repaint the legends of the power map in the Hemisphere and construct solid partnerships with strong allies as alternative to the US.

The Ex-Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega stated officially during a forum of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean, that "We [Latin American leaders] are sentencing the Monroe Doctrine to death." (Stone & Kuznick, 2013, p. 603). Indeed, in the last decade, Bolivarians did not only break free from US control but also provided economic, technological and military substitutes. From the US perspective, China and Iran's breach of the Monroe Doctrine and their attempt to undermine the US influence in the Western hemisphere is seen not as a mere annoyance but it is considered to be an imminent threat; "enemy at the backyard." More importantly, the increasing presence of both China and Iran is being bolstered by the open arms of Latin American leaders, the strengthened economic and diplomatic ties and the military cooperation.

The changing relation between the United States and Latin American countries could only get better. In recent years, there has been a remarkable change in US foreign policy rhetoric towards Latin America. It is no longer considered as America's Backyard but rather worthy partner. This sentiment was manifested by President Barrack Obama during the seventh Summit of the Americas in Panama City in April 2015, where he stated that "the days in which our agenda in this hemisphere presumed that the United States could meddle with impunity, those days are past." (The Telegraph, 2015).

### **Conclusion**

The narrative of both the incarcerator and the liberator in this paper is almost mythical depicting a model of contemporary struggle between Chimera and Bellerophon. Though, both were avid supporters of freedom and fought for it as soldiers and thinkers, no

one ever could have imagined that while the legacy of James Monroe, one of the founding father of the US, will hold in captivity a whole continent, the legacy of Simon Bolivar will actually liberate it. Now, it is a matter of fact that the Monroe Doctrine, the oldest milestone in US foreign policy has been sentenced to death. Subsequently, the legends of the power map in the Western Hemisphere are no longer red blue and white but more of a rainbow colors depicting power and political diversity in the Hemisphere and mainly in Latin America.