

U.S. Foreign Policy and the Other

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Introduction

Michael Patrick Cullinane and David Ryan

After World War II, U.S. identity faced severe dilemmas. Its constructed image—the power, the arsenal for democracy, representing liberty, self-determination, and economic liberalism—found itself closely allied with and cooperating with a range of European colonial empires reluctant to cede power in Asia and Africa. Moreover, Washington was quick to cultivate a dualistic image of the world, positing two ways of life that represented a defining choice in world history.

That construction was advanced in the Truman Doctrine of 1947 and elided the ties with European colonialism as it focused on the new other, the Soviet Union. The Cold War constructions pervaded U.S. foreign policy until the early 1990s, with significant disruption in the early 1970s during the era of détente and multipolarity brought on by the recovery of Europe and Japan and the consolidation of Chinese power. The polycentric world was constantly challenged by peripheral powers, nationalist movements, and revolutionaries that did not always move in tune with a superpower, but in pursuit of their own local and indigenous agendas.¹ Even as superpower tensions rose again in the late 1970s and then when Reagan entered the White House, the multipolar world remained, but Reagan's discourse and foreign policy agendas worked to ignore the changed context.²

This discourse and Manichaeian outlook recurred frequently in the history of U.S. foreign policy. Eisenhower's National Security Council considered the dilemma on the eve of Africa's decolonization in 1957. The resulting policy document (NSC 5719) illustrated the conundrum:

Premature independence would be as harmful to our interests in Africa as would be a continuation of nineteenth century colonialism, and we must tailor our policies to the capabilities and needs of each particular area as well as to our over-all relations with the metropolitan power concerned. It should be noted that all the metropolitan powers are associated with us in the NATO alliance or in military base agreements.³

Notes for this chapter begin on page 13.

Chapter 3

Identity, Alterity, and the “Growing Plant” of Monroeism in U.S. Foreign Policy Ideology

Marco Mariano

During his bid for reelection in the fall of 1940, while war was disrupting Europe, Franklin D. Roosevelt chose to focus his Columbus Day speech on hemispheric defense and Pan-American unity. From a train platform he explained to his audience in Dayton, Ohio, that the offensive of the Axis powers in Europe prompted an immediate response by the United States, and the Latin American republics; a joint effort was needed to stop Nazi and Fascist infiltration in the Americas and to mobilize military resources for a total defense of the Western Hemisphere.

As it was often the case in his public addresses, FDR was careful to frame security and foreign matters in a wider, accessible narration on the place of the United States and the American people in the world, and in history. The imagined European other was crucial to his construction of the national self. At a time when the contrast between a war-ravaged Europe infested by dictators and a peaceful democratic America could not be starker, the president recast his view of U.S. national security within the “old world” versus “new world” dichotomy, that had been generated in U.S. culture and diplomatic language across the nineteenth century.

Initially he praised the millions of immigrants from the old world who had “formed, here in the Western hemisphere, a new human reservoir.” These new Americans dedicated to the pursuit of new opportunities, peace, and freedom “proudly carried with them their inheritance of culture, but they cheerfully left behind them the burden of prejudice and hate,” thus becoming “citizens of the new world.” Similarly, FDR constructed the na-

Notes for this chapter begin on page 76.

tions of the new world as peace-loving republics bent on the pursuit of progress through friendly cooperation, sharing the same political values since their independence: “No one nation in this hemisphere has any desire to dominate the others. In the Western hemisphere no nation is considered a second-class nation ... The fire of freedom was in the eyes of Washington and Bolivar, and San Martin, and Artigas, and Juarez, and Bernardo O’Higgins, and all the brave, rugged, ragged men who followed them in the wars of independence.” But freedom, he warned, was now being threatened by “the foreign plots, the propaganda, the whole technique of underground warfare originating in Europe and now clearly directed against all of the Republics on this side of the ocean.”¹

Finally, once he had articulated his own version of the “two-spheres principle” originally stated in the Monroe Doctrine, FDR went on to reaffirm U.S. opposition to European attempts to establish a “foreign system” in the new world—another Monrovia principle—as he warned the totalitarian powers against any attempt to infiltrate, let alone attack, what he had defined as the “hemisphere of peace”: “There are those in the old world who persist in believing that here in this new hemisphere the Americas can be torn by the hatred and fear [which] have drenched the battle grounds of Europe for so many centuries ... ‘Divide and Conquer!’ That has been the battle-cry of the totalitarian powers in their war against the democracies. It has succeeded on their continent of Europe for the moment. On our continents it will fail.”²

This 1940 Columbus Day speech, part of FDR’s effort to disguise his interventionist agenda in the reassuring mantle of the Monroe Doctrine orthodoxy, reflected widespread U.S. concerns about Italian and German influence in key South American nations like Argentina and Brazil. It also revealed the hemispheric mind-set of a president who loved to display his command of geography. Finally, this speech illustrates the enduring legacy of the Monroe Doctrine as an ideological tool providing domestic cohesion and forging national identity by opposition, and defining the natural place and historical mission of the United States as one against a perceived other in the international arena.

To be sure, such a process of construction of the national self through difference in the realm of international affairs was by no means new in 1823. In fact, the doctrine codified widespread assumptions about the nation’s relation to the world, and its legacy continued to display its adaptability vis-à-vis the changing status of the United States in world politics and the changing domestic landscape. Tracing the origins of the Monroe Doctrine in U.S. foreign policy thinking illustrates how this mechanism of oppositional identity construction—that is, asserting a foreign other to define the national self—worked at three turning points in the history of U.S.

foreign relations, namely, the imperial turn of the late nineteenth century, the internationalist turn leading to the U.S. entry to World War II, and the globalist turn during the Cold War.

Revolutionary Seeds

The Monroe Doctrine as both a cornerstone of U.S. foreign relations and a marker of national identity is a demonstration of how nation-states, as Andrew M. Johnston argues, “contain two competing subjectivities, one as states-like-other-states, with a common interest in sovereignty and security” and the other as nations who “are built around particularist identities ... constantly articulating images of themselves, in their history texts, political speeches, popular culture, and so on, in order to create the social unity needed to mobilize power for the state, and to differentiate between inside and outside, us and them.” In a context in which states follow a rational-choice approach to power and security, while nations are constantly negotiated and contested as “imagined communities,” foreign policy discourse is best understood as a combination of both processes: the outcome of state bureaucracies operating under utilitarian assumptions believed to be universal as well as the particularist “desire to satisfy unstable internal arguments about the character of the nation itself.”³

This dual dimension of foreign policy is especially evident in the United States, “the imagined community *par excellence*,” a nation whose identity is particularly related to practices of cultural representation.⁴ Representations of the American self by opposition against an imagined other have been frequent since the revolutionary and early republican years; while the dichotomy between freedom and tyranny was obviously a central tenet of the construction of American identity, “mental maps” also played a crucial role within a political culture in which expansion, security, and freedom were closely interrelated.⁵ As the United States was being built as a nation, “space itself, in a way, became the outside counterpoint for the projection of the national self.”⁶

In fact, the Monroe Doctrine codified a tradition postulating geographic distance as a defining factor of the separation between the new world and the old, and of American alterity vis-à-vis Europe, as the writings of Thomas Paine, Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson illustrate in different ways.

Considerations about space, and size, were prominent in Paine’s case for a revolutionary turn in the struggle of the North American colonies. In *Common Sense*, he wrote: “It is not in the power of Britain to do this continent justice. The business of it will soon be too weighty, and intricate, to

be managed with any tolerable degree of convenience, by a power so distant from us, and so ignorant of us ... To be always running three or four thousand miles with a tale or a petition, waiting four or five months for an answer, which when obtained requires five or six months to explain it, will in a few years be looked upon as folly and childishness." Paine made it clear that the irreconcilable differences between America and Europe were rooted in the natural laws of geography, as well as in the natural right to liberty from the "royal brute." "There is something very absurd," he argued, "in supposing a continent perpetually governed by an island. In no instance hath nature made the satellite larger than its primary planet, and as England as America, with respect to each other, reverses the common order of nature, it is evident that they belong to different systems; England to Europe, America to itself."⁷

A few years later Alexander Hamilton in Federalist No. 11 formulated his own view of America's separateness from, and of the threat posed by, Europe. "The world may politically, as well as geographically, be divided into four parts [Africa, America, Asia, Europe], each having a distinct set of interests," with the latter imposing its "domination" on the other parts. In fact, Europe was a separate "quarter" but it was threatening nonetheless, and distance alone would not guarantee American security and prosperity. According to his federalist outlook, "under a vigorous national government, the natural strength and resources of the country, directed to a common interest, would baffle all the combinations of European jealousy to restrain our growth." As the two sides of the Atlantic were two distinct but interrelated spheres, the external threat of European imperialism made the foundation of a modern American state all the more urgent: "Let the thirteen States, bound together in a strict and indissoluble Union, concur in erecting one great American system, superior to the control of all transatlantic force or influence, and able to dictate the terms of the connection between the old and the new world!"⁸

While Hamilton's quest for a strong federal government was part of a bitter partisan feud on the issue of federalism, Washington's *Farewell Address* (1796) soon came to be revered as a paradigmatic synthesis of U.S. ideals and interests in foreign policy. The construction of American identity by means of opposition to the European other and the rejection of foreign interference as a prerequisite for national security were central tenets of his address, in which notions about space were instrumental in defining the contours of what was established as the natural, as opposed to artificial, place of the United States in the world. In Washington's view, geography contributed to show how U.S. involvement in European affairs was unnatural and therefore harmful:

Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none; or a very remote relation ... Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves by artificial ties in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities. Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course ... Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation? Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humor or caprice?⁹

Finally, this rigid dichotomy was put to the test by the wave of Latin American independences in the 1810s, introducing a third actor in the stage of world politics.

Skepticism about Latin Americans' fitness for republican self-government was widespread in the United States, partly due to anti-Catholicism and racial prejudice about miscegenation. In the following decades, American observers read endemic political instability, widespread Catholic influence, the abolition of slavery in several countries, and attempts of monarchic restoration in Brazil and Mexico as proof of the ties that still linked Latin America to the old world.¹⁰ However, it was believed that geographic proximity might prompt some progress at least among the neighboring regions "beneath the United States."

In fact, U.S. visions of Latin America in the early nineteenth century exemplify the complexity of the grammars of alterity. Gerd Baumann and Andre Gingrich argue that the process of selfing/othering does not necessarily reproduce a binary friend-versus-foe dynamic; rather, it depends on the context it is applied to. In this case, according to a Western hemispheric perspective, Latin America was easily depicted as an inferior, distant other within a rigid hierarchy of alterity. On the other hand, according to an Atlantic perspective, the quintessential other was the old continent of Europe, while Latin America started to be cautiously and selectively "encompassed" depending on how its distance from/proximity to the United States was interpreted.¹¹

A letter that Jefferson, a strong proponent of continental expansion, sent to Alexander Von Humboldt exemplifies how notions of distance/proximity affected the way U.S. leaders dealt with the Latin American dilemma within the rigid self-versus-other dichotomy, which nicely dove-tailed with the relations between the United States and the European imperial powers. Jefferson had very low expectations about the new Latin American republics, except perhaps for those who might profit from their proximity to the United States. In his view, history showed that a "priest-ridden people" marked by "the lowest level of ignorance" were

unlikely to maintain “a free civil government.” However, he also believed that U.S. “vicinity” to and exchanges with the Latin American republics “may furnish schools for the higher, and example for the lower classes of their citizens. And Mexico, where we learn from you that men of science are not wanting, may revolutionize itself under better auspices than the Southern provinces. These last, I fear, must end in military despotisms” because of the “different casts of their inhabitants, their mutual hatreds and jealousies, their profound ignorance and bigotry.”

Even so, he trusted that these new republics were destined to escape the doom of the European balance of power thanks to their separateness from the old world:

But in whatever governments they end they will be *American* governments, no longer to be involved in the never-ceasing broils of Europe. The European nations constitute a separate division of the globe; their localities make them part of a distinct system; they have a set of interests of their own in which it is our business never to engage ourselves. America has a hemisphere to itself. It must have its separate system of interests, which must not be subordinated to those of Europe. The insulated state in which nature has placed the American continent, should so far avail it that no spark of war kindled in the other quarters of the globe should be wafted across the wide oceans which separate us from them. And it will be so.¹²

While Jefferson’s emphasis on the separation between America and the European other contributed to “reflect and form societal ideals and views of the international environment,” his confidence in American insularity as a source of security was questioned by the events that reshaped the geopolitics of the Atlantic world in the 1810s.¹³ On the one hand, the collapse of imperial Spain and the extension of the republican model to former European colonies confirmed the confidence of the Founding Fathers in the superiority of U.S. institutions, while the opening of new opportunities in terms of trade and influence confirmed their increasing optimism on the glorious destiny of the nation. On the other hand, many in the United States feared that turmoil and instability in the Western hemisphere could pave the way to the maneuvering and intrigue of the major European imperial powers—especially after the latter [the European imperial powers] had solemnly announced their reactionary agenda to the world at the Congress of Vienna. Likewise, old world powers feared that the republican disease might spread across Europe via Spain but, at the same time, hoped that commercial opportunities might open up in Central and South America. The rise of this “Western question” urged the United States to redefine its place and its mission in an evolving Atlantic context; James Monroe’s inaugural address of 1823 offered such definition.¹⁴

Again, geographic determinism was instrumental to the conceptualization of the Atlantic space as a cohesive unit structured by the multiple dynamics of ideological opposition, geopolitical competition, and economic integration. The Monroe Doctrine codified a natural theology in which the natural and the rightful overlapped, and imagined proximity/distance concurred to the definition of identity/difference and the perception of a threat.¹⁵ Distance from Europe, combined with the relevance of European imperial powers for U.S. security and trade, dictated the twin Monrovia principles of U.S. opposition to further colonization in the new world and U.S. noninterference in the affairs of the old world that did not concern U.S. interests.

On the other hand, American proximity with “Southern brethren” provided a natural and therefore rightful argument for U.S. hemispheric hegemony. According to James Monroe, “With the movements in this hemisphere we are of necessity more immediately connected, and by causes which must be obvious to all enlightened and impartial observers.” Or as David Ryan has put it, “Latin America was the object of the document, but the subject was transatlantic relations; the new world versus the old world.”¹⁶

Imperial Offsprings

The long-lasting influence of the Monroe Doctrine is due to the fact that its two-sphere principle continued to affect the American politics of identity in changing ways throughout U.S. history. In 1900, Alfred Tayer Mahan defined it as “an inherent principle of life, which adapts itself with the flexibility of a growing plant, to the successive conditions it encounters.”¹⁷ Conditions were definitely favorable during the 1840s when, after two decades of relative neglect, the doctrine was deployed by President Polk to support the manifest destiny of westward expansion (incidentally, Monroe’s address featured a sentence including the words “manifestation” and “destiny”).¹⁸

But it was the imperialist turn of the 1890s that prompted not only a massive use of the doctrine in the public discourse, but also a major reinterpretation of its tenets. While the Spanish-American War marked a watershed in the rise of the United States as the undisputed continental power and potential global player, Theodore Roosevelt’s corollary transformed the Monroe Doctrine both as a cornerstone of U.S. foreign relations and as an identity-making tool. His “Big Stick” version was part of a new orientalist discourse that recast the place of the United States in the world—from the new, righteous half of a divided West, with Europe as the

villain, to the assertive member of an extended, transatlantic West, with “barbarism” as the villain.

The context of this sea change is well known. Since the Civil War, the increase in transatlantic trade, economic integration, and cultural exchanges made possible by technological advance in transportation had linked the United States and Europe in closely knit “Atlantic landscape.”¹⁹ At the same time, the age of imperialism contributed to reshape both power relations and mutual images between the new world and the old. Anglo-American rapprochement in the Caribbean and elsewhere was legitimized by a flood of Anglo-Saxon rhetoric, that in turn was part of a “civilizational discourse of conquest and uplifting” with strong, pseudoscientific racial undertones on both sides of the Atlantic.²⁰ Finally, evolutionism reinforced the ideology of U.S. civilizational imperialism by articulating in secular and transatlantic terms the impulse in U.S. attitudes toward a set predestined path set for other nations and cultures. As Matthew Frye Jacobson puts it, “the ascendant Euro-American fetish of evolutionary development had tremendous consequences for the U.S. encounter with foreign peoples: it provided a narrative for otherwise disparate and disjointed images of the world’s nations and tribes ... it became a secular counterpart to an earlier religious discourse of the Christian civilizing mission among the ‘heathen.’”²¹ Finally, the works by Alfred T. Mahan—whose influence on Roosevelt was significant—provided geopolitical underpinnings to the “civilizational” imperialism advocated by reverend Josiah Strong, historian John Fiske, and political scientist John Burgess. In Mahan’s view, the United States had to build a strong naval force to expand its regional hegemony and compete with Western powers globally; at the same time, he urged Americans to rediscover their roots in Western civilization and to carry on their uplifting mission: “We stand at the opening of a period when the question is to be settled decisively ... whether Eastern civilization or Western civilization is to dominate throughout the Earth,” he wrote in 1897.²² These developments by no means undermined American exceptionalism; in fact they reinforced a wider narrative based on the encounter between a civilized Anglo-Saxon West and a savage barbarian other.

Theodore Roosevelt’s world view and foreign policy exemplify how the American grammar of alterity at the turn of century had changed with respect to the 1820s, but at the same time was still being formulated in Monrovia terms. He saw the world as divided in two spheres: a Christian civilization led by the Anglo-Saxon people versus the “waste spaces” of the world dominated by barbarism and despotism. In his *The Strenuous Life* (1899), he lamented that “many of the [Philippine] people are utterly unfit for self-government, and show no signs of becoming fit” and expressed

widespread assumptions on the hierarchy of race and civilization: "We have driven Spanish tyranny from the islands. If we now let it be replaced by savage anarchy, our work has been for harm and not for good." Roosevelt expressed how changing notions of threat and of otherness were changing America's self-image—from the new Israel, the revolutionary outpost called to regenerate the world by example, to the new Rome, the world power called to lead the transatlantic West by intervention.²³

This transformation was codified in his Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, which combined the cultural premises of civilizational imperialism with the assertive claim of U.S. police powers in the Western hemisphere. As financial instability in the Dominican Republic threatened French intervention to protect national interests, Roosevelt stated in his fifth annual message to Congress that: "chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power." At a time when the international status of the United States was being transformed, the corollary radically changed the meaning of the Monroe Doctrine by claiming for the U.S. exclusive police powers to enforce its principles and by paving the way to a radical change in U.S. attitude toward Latin America. As Walter LaFeber put it, it was an "historic switch in the doctrine's targets, from attacking European states that would interfere with Latin American revolutions to attacking the revolutions themselves."²⁴ This switch was part of a broader change of attitude toward Latin America and toward other peoples and countries. Compared to the 1820s, Americans were now much less committed to escaping the world, and in fact many believed that the nation was bound to lead it. The "search for order" that characterized the domestic scene in the Progressive era also involved U.S. foreign relations. According to Herbert Croly's "new nationalism," a new world order had to be built by putting aside "some essential incompatibility between Europeanism and Americanism" and rejecting "continental provincialism and chauvinism" and the "sort of religious sanctity" associated to isolationism.²⁵ Similarly, Roosevelt valued order at the international as well as at the domestic level. He stated in his address to Congress that: "All that this country desires is to see the neighboring countries stable, orderly, and prosperous. And they cannot be happy and prosperous unless they maintain order within their boundaries and behave with a just regard for their obligations toward outsiders." Establishing order, by force if necessary, was part of the mission of the civilized powers in the lands of despotism and lawlessness.

In his view, as in the view of many of his contemporaries, history was a linear succession of stages from barbarism to civilization. In this Spence-rian framework, which Roosevelt translated in Monrovia parlance with his corollary, imperial powers were called to favor the expansion of civilization by imposing order; they would “make the rules and punish transgression but, by the same token, would also be obliged to provide protection (as well as education and welfare) and an example to emulate.”²⁶

To be sure, several dissenting voices questioned the Monrovia revival. In 1896 William Graham Sumner, a prominent conservative critic of the imperialist turn, dismissed what he defined “the proposed dual organization of mankind” as “new spinnings of political metaphysics.”²⁷ However, the imperial rendition of Monroeism was clearly hegemonic at the turn of the century, as it turned out to be flexible and adaptable to the new domestic and international scenario both as a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy, as we have seen, and as an identity-making tool. Compared to the rigid, binary construction of identity versus alterity that informed the original Monroe Doctrine, here we have a different, more complex orientalist grammar based on the concept of encompassing, that works at two different levels—the lower recognizing difference between “the West and the rest,” the higher partially and gradually overcoming difference in the name of universal features, such as the values of Western civilization at the turn of the century, or the stages of modernization and progress after World War II.²⁸

This was by no means a totally new development; in fact it was consistent with the missionary impulse of the ideology of U.S. foreign policy. Back in 1816, as Latin American independence was opening the way to greater U.S. influence, Jefferson remarked: “What a colossus shall we be, when the southern continent comes up to our mark!”²⁹ However, by the end of the nineteenth century the imperialist turn not only multiplied American encounters with other peoples and nations, it also required that what Samuel Flagg Bemis classified as “a great aberration” be incorporated within the benevolent narrative of American exceptionalism. Theodore Roosevelt responded exactly to this urge to differentiate U.S. expansionism from tyrannical old world—especially Spanish—imperialism when he stated in his corollary that U.S. intervention in Dominican affairs “will give the people of Santo Domingo the same chance to move onward and upward which we have already given to the people of Cuba.” Finally, as the United States was asserting its imperial role in the Western hemisphere and beyond, images of the other changed accordingly. While advocates of expansionism in Congress, in the press, and in the business community recast the U.S. emancipating mission in paternalistic terms, the Latin American other was often portrayed as the unruly child demanding

tutelage and guidance. The prevailing American image was now that of “an infantile and often negroid Latin, [which] provided the justification for Uncle Sam’s tutelage and stern discipline.”³⁰

To sum up, at a time when the place of the United States in the world was going through dramatic changes, U.S. notions of identity/alterity were being reconstructed. Americans were now defining the national self and the foreign other through the ubiquitous concept of civilization, combining the ethics of Christian moralism, the pseudoscience of white supremacy, and the power of economic and technological development. The trans-atlantic links of religion, race, trade, and empire undermined the rigid new world versus old world dichotomy forged in the revolutionary years, and would eventually dismantle it along the twentieth century. The un-civilized other was to be found South of the border, and the triumphant American giant, far from fearing it, would eventually emancipate it from savagery and despotism. Needless to say, such a dramatic change in mental maps, construction of national identity, and foreign policy priorities required some adjustment. The triumphant outcome of the Spanish-American war led to a twofold aberration: not only was the United States building an overseas colonial empire, it was also stepping out of its traditional, hemispheric “sphere of interest.”

As Anders Stephanson put it, “The Philippines presented a particular problem in that they were spatially a part of the old world, the dichotomous other of the ‘new.’ How was one to square this with the consecrated Monroe Doctrine?”³¹ Roosevelt’s corollary did the trick by diluting the continental meta-geography of Monroeism in the universal dimension of the civilizational discourse. Isolation had been selfish, the British were showing how empires could be righteous, and the United States seemed to be ready to assume the responsibility of a world power.

Global Ending

In the twentieth century Monroeism continued to provide a powerful ideological framework to the state’s quest for power and security as well as to the nation’s quest for identity. Perceptions of external threat continued to play a crucial role in the definition of the national interest, while notions of alterity and difference continued to shape the contours of the national imagined community.

By the time the doctrine’s centennial was celebrated, the *New York Times* carried a full-page advertisement in which Christian Science founder Mary Baker Eddy revered it as an undisputable sacred text. And on the eve of World War II, when a foreign other was again questioning the place and

the mission of the United States in the world, the ideology of Monroeism was again being appropriated and reinterpreted by opponents as well as advocates of the U.S. entry to the war.

In the late 1930s, Theodore Roosevelt's corollary seemed a relic from a distant past. The notion of a group of imperial powers sharing a civilizing mission on behalf of "the West" had been crushed since World War I; the bitter legacy of the first American intervention in a European war had revived old, isolationist suspicions against the old world balance of power, and the failure of the Wilsonian dream of a new world order had paved the way to a nationalist revival with an unmistakable hemispheric tinge; the crisis of 1929 and the Depression led to economic nationalism and the collapse of the transatlantic integration of industrial and financial markets; traditional anti-European attitudes were fueled by the spread of old-fashioned authoritarianism and new totalitarian regimes across the Atlantic in the interwar years; finally, starting in the early 1930s FDR's Good Neighbor policy resuscitated "the original defensive and anti-European conception of the Monroe Doctrine," and added a multilateral twist that marked a significant breakthrough in inter-American relations.³²

FDR's 1940 Columbus Day speech situated the United States in the international arena as to reflect these shifts. It resorted to the original orientalist model of 1823 that constructed American identity by means of opposition to the European other. However, while FDR updated the two-sphere principle, he was aware that economic and strategic interdependence prevented isolation and made free security and hemispheric self-sufficiency impossible in the modern world. On the eve of World War II, he relied on Monroeism and its dual function as an identity-making tool—by imagining a sense of hemispheric American-ness in opposition to a European other—and as a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy—by reinterpreting hemispheric defense as the first step toward global commitment.

FDR genuinely shared the "Europhobic-cum-hemispheric" mind-set of influential members of his administration like Under-Secretary of State Sumner Welles and Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle, and was attuned to the widespread continentalist revival of the 1920s and 1930s.³³ In a 1939 speech to the Pan American Union he defined the "American family of nations" as sharing a "common civilization under a system of peace" as well as "diversities of race, of language, of custom, of natural resources; and of intellectual forces at least as great as those which prevail in Europe." Against the backdrop of events across the Atlantic, peaceful relations and mutual cooperation were creating a new American identity: "we have begun to realize in Pan American relations what civilization in intercourse between countries really means." And yet, as FDR constructed national identity through difference in characteristic Monrovia fashion,

he also stated that such difference could be overcome, and that "civilization" could and should be reproduced beyond the Western hemisphere: "If that process can be successful here, is it too much to hope that a similar intellectual and spiritual process may succeed elsewhere? Do we really have to assume that nations can find no better methods of realizing their destinies than those which were used by the Huns and the Vandals fifteen hundred years ago?"³⁴ Behind closed doors, his language was less empathic but his hemispheric mind-set emerged nonetheless: "For the first time since the Holy alliance in 1818 the United States now faced the possibility of an attack on the Atlantic side in both the Northern and the Southern hemispheres" FDR said in a 1938 cabinet meeting.³⁵

As in 1823, the barbarian other situated on the other side of the Atlantic was instrumental to forge domestic cohesion and to define the place and the mission of America. As in 1904, however, identity and alterity were constructed in complex, dynamic terms through a discourse of encompassing, which bridges the gap between barbarism and civilization. In fact, in FDR's Wilsonian understanding of modern interdependence, expansion of civilization against barbarism was not only desirable, but necessary. As Walter LaFeber put it, "[b]y 1941 Roosevelt brought North Americans a long way to accepting a part of Wilson's original vision: to think of the doctrine as intertwined with a global responsibility they would have to assume."³⁶

Uses of geography and cartography by policy makers, commentators, and the media were crucial in this transformation of both the ideological use and the popular understanding of the doctrine from the old, reassuring idea of separate spheres to the new fear of falling dominoes. "We know that the development of the next generation will so narrow the oceans separating us from the old world, that our customs and our actions are necessarily involved with hers ... within a scant few years air fleets will cross the oceans as easily as today they cross the closed European seas," stated FDR in his 1939 Pan American Union speech, thus echoing Walter Lippmann's influential remarks on the Atlantic ocean as a bridge, rather than a barrier, between the new world and the old.³⁷

To be sure, both opponents and advocates of U.S. intervention resorted to arguments about proximity/distance in order to situate the United States and the Western hemisphere vis-à-vis the old world and to advance their conflicting notions of national interest as the natural consequence of America's place in the world. On the one hand, isolationists held on to the traditional understanding of the doctrine based on reciprocal noninterference as well as on the two-sphere principle, and to a rigidly continentalist mind-set. On the other, many internationalists adhered to the Monrovia dogma of hemispheric defense, but at the same time, reshaped the very

notion of hemisphere and of its relation to the world. While experts debunked the myth of continental determinism, FDR literally redrew the contours of the Western hemisphere with a stroke of a pen so as to include Greenland and possibly Iceland, Cape Verde, and the Azores to emphasize that events in Europe were by no means distant and alien to U.S. interests.³⁸

Such meta-geographic disputes were part of a wider dispute over the role of the United States in world affairs that reflected competing notions of national identity as the ubiquitous threat posed by a not-so-distant other made it all the more impossible to imagine the national community in purely domestic terms. At a time when the United States found itself threatened not only in its national interests, but also in its fundamental values, the new world/old world dichotomy of the original doctrine perfectly fit the civilizational confrontation underway in World War II. However, Pearl Harbor definitely showed that the new Israel's separation from the rest of the world was an empty illusion and interdependence was the present and the future, as Wilson had anticipated and FDR had famously reminded the American public in his 1937 Quarantine speech: "Let no one imagine that America will escape, that America may expect mercy, that this Western hemisphere will not be attacked and that it will continue tranquilly and peacefully to carry on the ethics and the arts of civilization ... It seems to be unfortunately true that the epidemic of world lawlessness is spreading. When an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the health of the community against the spread of the disease."³⁹ Not surprisingly, the Rooseveltian reinterpretation of Monroe-ism prevailed in the foreign policy establishment as well as in the public discourse during the war years, as it grounded the rise of the United States as the global leader of the West and the permanent U.S. entanglement with Europe and the world within a traditional narrative of American nationalism.

Finally, after World War II, the orientalist dual world view of Monroeism contributed to shape American Cold War ideology. It continued to rationalize the old tension between regionalism and globalism in U.S. foreign policy by providing a world view in which sealing off the Western hemisphere to foreign influence was consistent with projecting U.S. influence globally. Conversely, it continued to inform U.S. views of and policies toward Latin America. In March 1947, James Reston wrote in the *New York Times* that according to "the tentative conclusions of responsible observers" the Truman Doctrine "like the Monroe Doctrine, warned that the United States would resist efforts to impose a political system of foreign domination on areas vital to our security."⁴⁰ It was yet another twist in the history of appropriations and reinterpretations of the doctrine—

one that expunged geographic boundaries and extended the range of U.S. power and interests from the Western hemisphere to a potentially global West. In fact, in the early Cold War years the Soviet threat came to be perceived as both global and absolute; in 1950 the notorious NSC-68 stated that—as the Soviet Union was “animated by a fanatic faith, antithetical to our own”—what was at stake was “the fulfillment or destruction not only of this Republic but of civilization itself.” Again, the Monrovia grammar of alterity came to be expedient at a time when national identity was being constructed by opposition to an alien, threatening other. The Cold War order reconfigured the two-sphere principle and the noncolonization principle. As Walter LaFeber points out: “The Monroe Doctrine did not have to be again proclaimed because the ‘two camp’ division of the world and the de facto economic and military hegemony of the U.S. of the Western hemisphere allowed North American officials to assume the validity of the Doctrine ... the evolving principles of Monroe were not questioned, just extended.”⁴¹ The lingering influence of the doctrine was evident also in the way American policy makers shaped inter-American relations throughout the Cold War according to both global considerations and deep-rooted assumptions about Latin American people and culture.

In 1950, when international tension reached an unprecedented peak, American fears of Communist infiltration and subversion south of the border soared to wartime levels. At the same time, the foreign policy establishment was relatively unprepared to tackle hemispheric issues after many years in which Europe and later the Far East had received much greater attention; the days of the Good Neighbor diplomacy were long gone and diplomatic celebrity George Kennan, a Europeanist with very little knowledge of Latin America, was asked to provide a new strategic framework for the region. The outcome was “Latin America as a problem in United States foreign policy,” a ten-thousand-word memorandum recommended a hard-line approach to prevent Communist attempts “to make the Latin American countries pawns in the power aspirations of regimes beyond the limits of this continent.” While the “vigor and efficacy of local concepts and traditions of self-government” were the best response to Soviet expansionism, Kennan argued, conditions in Latin America required a different approach. As such concepts and traditions were “too weak to absorb successfully the intensity of the communist attack, then we must concede that harsh governmental measures of repression maybe the only answer.” The United States had to support any regime ready to adopt such measures, including those with “origins and methods that would not stand the test of American concept of democratic procedures.”⁴²

The distance Kennan emphasized in terms of democratic standards paralleled the personal estrangement he felt during the mission through

Latin America he undertook earlier in 1950. In his memoirs he recalled the journey as “anything but pleasant” and concluded that in the region “the handicaps to progress are written in human blood and in the tracings of geography; and in neither case are they readily susceptible of obliteration ... and the answers people have suggested to them thus far have been fee-ble and unpromising.”⁴³ The contrast with the sense of hemispheric “we-ness” and belonging to a community of nations sharing cultural traditions and political institutions, a feeling that many high-ranking officials in the FDR administration publicly expressed and privately felt, could not be more stark. Latin America was again marginalized as a dubious member of the expanded Cold War West that encompassed the European colonial powers and reiterated “the narrative of freedom and democracy.”⁴⁴ Racial notions of otherness were now unacceptable, but they reemerged in secret memos like Kennan’s, or were voiced implicitly, as in Dwight Eisenhower’s remark about Argentinians being “the same kind of people we are.”⁴⁵

What Gaddis Smith defined as the “Kennan corollary” to the Truman Doctrine was followed by a string of U.S. interventions in the affairs of Guatemala (1954), Brazil (1964), the Dominican Republic (1965), and Chile (1973), not to mention the heavy-handed approach to Central American crises during Ronald Reagan’s “second Cold War.” In an address before Congress in 1983, Reagan framed events in Nicaragua and El Salvador in terms of the hemispheric meta-geography of Monroeism: “Central America’s problems do directly affect the security and the well-being of our own people. And Central America is much closer to the United States than many of the world trouble spots that concern us. So, we work to restore our own economy; we cannot afford to lose sight of our neighbors to the south. El Salvador is nearer to Texas than Texas is to Massachusetts. Nicaragua is just as close to Miami, San Antonio, San Diego, and Tucson as those cities are to Washington, where we’re gathered tonight.”⁴⁶

An exception to this trend was the highly ambitious, deeply flawed, and largely unsuccessful Alliance for Progress launched by the Kennedy administration. Yet again, this attempt to reverse recent U.S. policy in the area was articulated in Monrovia terms. The dogma of hemispheric defense was widely used to sell the Alliance for Progress at home and abroad. Harvard historian-turned-presidential adviser Arthur Schlesinger was among the many academics directly involved in Latin American policy in the early 1960s. When he met Bolivian president Paz Estenssoro in a 1961 mission through South America, he made it clear that “where revolution meant healthy social change, the Kennedy administration could be depended on to look on it with sympathy, but not so when revolution meant dictatorship, repression and the entry of alien forces into the hemisphere.”⁴⁷ At same time, as he made his case for the Alliance for Progress,

he pictured Latin America as ready for reform and “modernization” because it was “part of the west, permeated and tantalized by democratic ideals of freedom and progress, where the existence of a common and political inheritance might create the possibilities of partnership and action that did not exist in Asia or Africa.”⁴⁸

Latin America was being included again in the civilizational notion of the West, meant as a specific historical and cultural entity and as a distinct political and economic system in the global context. Monrovia-orientalist assumptions were implicit, and sometimes explicit, in this world view. At a time when modernization theory à la Walt Rostow was gaining increasing influence in official as well as academic circles, many believed that Latin America was especially positioned to fast-forward in the transition toward modernization. Harvard economist and diplomat Lincoln Gordon wrote in an account of his participation in Kennedy’s Latin American task force that: “We believed that most of the region, especially the larger countries of South America and Mexico, were on the threshold of a Rostovian take-off. [There were] institutional and social obstacles, but not cultural ones such as oriental fatalism, sacred cows, or caste system.” To Gordon, the Latin American landscape was a familiar one, and was “in sharp contrast with Africa, which still lacked the preconditions for take-off, and South and South East Asia, which would have to overcome ancient cultural obstacles.”⁴⁹

Discussing the legacy of the Monroe Doctrine is relevant to the extent that the sacred text of 1823 and its many adaptations and interpretations provided not just a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy, but also an answer to the question: What is the relationship of the United States to the world?

Such answer was threefold in the original doctrine. First, the division of the world in two spheres created an American identity against a foreign other, and rooted the American experience in the Western hemisphere— that is in the natural, as opposed to artificial, realm of geography. Second, opposition to further colonization reiterated the exceptional historical mission of America and its opposition to European imperialism; in fact it made clear that the United States was willing to lead by intervention, not only by example. Moreover, the doctrine merged geography and history, space and time in a discourse on national security, preserving the geographical separation and carrying on the historical mission was vital to the survival and, later, the expansion of the American republic. It was a “declaration of diplomatic independence” as it framed national security as a natural development of U.S. history and geography which was easily understandable to the American public.

Finally, the doctrine informed an ideology that turned out to be flexible enough to shape the American imagined community in the twentieth cen-

tury by constructing changing notions of the European other as well as the Latin American other, but also by appropriating selected features of the other to build changing notions of the self and of “the West”. As Gretchen Murphy suggested, Monroeism turned out to be compatible with, and in fact has provided the foundations for, different narrations of the American experiment: “the empire for liberty and the postcolonial retreat from old world power, U.S. isolation and expansion, the American missions to reform the world and to escape from history.”⁵⁰

Notes

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