
Theodore Roosevelt and Japan's Monroe Doctrine

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COMMENT AND OPINION

THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND JAPAN'S MONROE DOCTRINE

SOMETIMES loudly, sometimes in whispers, Japan's "Monroe Doctrine" has been heralded for many years. If the original Monroe Doctrine, after having existed for so long, can still be considered by the Council of the League of Nations to be "an unsolved international conundrum,"¹ the imitated tenet, on the other hand, may well be construed by partisan spokesmen as warranting Japan's invasion of China. Although the existence of Japan's "Monroe Doctrine" is well known, its origin has been shrouded in an atmosphere of mystery. It was not until the publication of Viscount Kaneko's secret memoirs in the September, 1932, issue of *Contemporary Japan* that this mystery was removed and the world, for the first time, enlightened on the fact that it was no other than Theodore Roosevelt, one of America's most famous presidents, who was responsible for its original enunciation.

The publication in Tokyo of Viscount Kaneko's secret memoirs concerning President Theodore Roosevelt's advocacy of Japan's "Monroe Doctrine" is evidently designed to show that that great statesman was sympathetic, long ago, to a policy of the kind which Japan is now following in China. President Roosevelt's opinion of thirty years ago, as recorded in the secret memoirs, appears to form a sharp contrast with America's Far Eastern policy of today, or of any other period, and what the world knows of him would forbid us to believe that his keen sense of justice and great love of fair play could have tolerated, much less sympathized with, an intervention of the type at present exercised by Japan. A careful examination of the circumstances surrounding President Theodore Roosevelt's suggestion of a "Monroe Doctrine for Japan" must therefore be not only of interest but of paramount importance.

Viscount Kaneko states that during the negotiation of the Portsmouth Treaty, in 1905, President Roosevelt advocated that Japan should adopt an "Asiatic Monroe Doctrine" and promised "as clearly and forcibly as possible" that if Japan would proclaim such a doctrine after the Peace of Portsmouth, he would "support her with all [his] power, either

¹ Quoted by *The Nation*, 12 September, 1928.

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during [his] presidency or after its expiration." I do not propose to question the authenticity or even the accuracy of Viscount Kaneko's statement, but it may be pointed out that other parts of President Roosevelt's conversation on that occasion, also quoted by Viscount Kaneko, should be given due consideration in order to understand his feeling in the matter.

In the first place, the President's condition for Japan's Monroe Doctrine, as the Viscount himself states, was that the "future policy of Japan towards Asiatic countries should be similar to that of the United States toward her neighbors on the American continent." What does history tell us in this connection? America got Cuba from Spain, but Cuba has become an independent nation; whereas Japan got Korea from China, but the Koreans have become a down-trodden people, with no hope of freedom and a great fear of losing their nationality, their culture and their written language, because the Korean language is virtually excluded from the schools and Korean history is rewritten to suit Japan's expansionist policy.² America controls the Panama Canal Zone, but leaves the country of Panama to take care of its own affairs; whereas Japan extends the South Manchuria Railway Zone at will, and has even gone so far as to occupy the whole of Manchuria and part of Inner Mongolia by force. Japanese writers may point to Haiti, but the American marines in Haiti have been gradually reduced, whereas Japan's troops on Chinese soil have been continually increased. Japanese may also mention Nicaragua, but America's intervention in that country is insignificant compared with Japan's interference in China along the South Manchuria Railway alone. America endeavors to prevent European nations from interfering with the affairs of its neighbors, but Japan joins or anticipates the European nations, on every occasion, in interfering with China's business.

Moreover, America has done much to promote union and harmony among its neighbors; whereas Japan has done everything to foment disruption in China. When General Kuo Sung-lin was on the verge of successfully eliminating Marshal Chang Tso-lin in order to bring about the union of Manchuria with Peking in 1925, it was Japanese "railway guards" who defeated Kuo and thereby helped Chang to defy the Central Government. In 1927, when the Nationalist army was rapidly marching to the goal of unification, Japan sent an armed force to Tsinan and thereby delayed China's unification for over a year. In 1929, Japan "advised" Marshal Chang Hsüeh-liang not to unite with

² Henry Chung, *Korean Treaties*, New York, 1919.

the Central Government. Finally, in 1931, when China was fighting against the worst flood disaster of a hundred years and was locked in a desperate struggle against the communists in Kiangsi, with the sympathy and help of the League of Nations and friendly Powers, Japan took advantage of China's misfortunes and suddenly executed its long-planned invasion.

In addition to forming the directive power of its action in China, Japan's "Monroe Doctrine" is said to justify the retention of the Caroline Islands, which lie between Guam and the Philippines, after Japan's resignation from the League of Nations; because the retention of these islands, it is claimed, forms an essential part of that doctrine. The Tokyo Navy Office has declared on many occasions that the mandated islands are Japan's "life-line" on the sea, as Manchuria is its "life-line" on the land, and Japan will never surrender them. Japan's contention is that secession from the League does not affect its possession of these former German colonies, because the sovereignty of the islands under mandate is vested solely in Japan by virtue of secret agreements concluded during the war and later confirmed by the Allied Supreme Council.

THIS contention, however, needs careful consideration, for if it is to be accepted, then sovereignty over the ex-Turkish provinces placed under mandate must be considered to rest, not with the League, but with Great Britain and France, by virtue of the secret Sykes-Picot agreement which contemplated the partition of these provinces between the two Powers. In this respect, Japan seems to have overlooked the fact that the original war aims of the Allies were revised and that secret agreements and private undertakings were superseded by the Peace Treaty. It need not be denied that the influence of prior secret understandings may be traced in the final Versailles settlement, but it is clear that they cannot be invoked unless they were actually incorporated in the treaty.

The settlement in respect to the Caroline Islands, under Japanese mandate, is embodied in Article 119 of the Treaty of Versailles, in accordance with which Germany renounced its colonial possessions in favor of the Allied Powers, with a view to their being placed under mandate in accordance with Article 22 of the League Covenant, which forms an integral part of the Peace Treaty. It was quite clear that Germany's renunciation was not made in favor of Japan itself, and that Japan, consequently, could not acquire sovereign rights over any part of these former German possessions. As to the Supreme Council representing these Allied Powers, it simply acted, in allocating the various

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mandates, as temporary executor of the Peace Treaty and its functions were taken over by the Council of the League.

On the other hand, it may be pointed out that Article 22 of the Covenant does not explicitly exclude the possibility of awarding mandates to non-members of the League, although, in that case, special guarantees may be required. What must be emphasized is that the grounds on which Japan's claims to the retention of the Pacific Islands are based, like those on which are based justification for the invasion of Manchuria, cannot be upheld in international law. "They imply, indeed," as a European authority has stated, "the annexation pure and simple of the Pacific Islands in disregard of the peace settlement, the special treaty concluded by Japan and the United States, and, in particular, the Covenant of the League of Nations."⁸ But in this as in other respects concerning the Far Eastern crisis, Japan's action is based upon its own interpretation of treaties and covenants. As the special correspondent of the London *Morning Post* reported on March 27th, 1933:

Whatever legal arguments are advanced, Japan intends to retain the Pacific Islands, by force if necessary. In the final analysis Japan will tell the Powers to come and take them if they want them. The Japanese Navy is prepared to defend the islands from any attempt to dispossess Japan.

Another part of Viscount Kaneko's article is especially interesting. He quotes Theodore Roosevelt as saying, with regard to Japan's "Monroe Doctrine":

I will announce it myself to the world at some suitable opportunity after my term of office has expired. When I decide to make it public, I will send a cable authorizing you to do the same, so that we can publish it simultaneously, you in Japan and I in America.

The significant fact is that this promised simultaneous announcement was never made, in spite of the fact that President Roosevelt lived many years after retiring from the White House. It can only be concluded that his failure to carry out his promise to proclaim Japan's "Monroe Doctrine" must have been due to a deliberate change of mind regarding the desirability of such a doctrine.

The reasons for such a change of attitude are obvious. In 1904 Japan declared that its principal reason for fighting Russia was to maintain the independence of Korea and the integrity of China. The precise

⁸ See *The Times*, London, 31st March, 1933.

cause given by Baron Komura, the Japanese Foreign Minister, which led to the breaking off of diplomatic relations with Russia, was:

Japan desired that Russia should recognize Manchuria as an integral part of China. Provided that such a declaration was forthcoming, Japan was prepared to allow Russia a complete liberty of action in that province.⁴

Being an ardent lover of such noble ideals as those championed by Japan in 1904, President Roosevelt naturally was greatly impressed. It was therefore but natural that he should have advocated a "Japanese Monroe Doctrine" as he understood it. It may be noticed that the reason given by Japan in 1904 for declaring war against Russia was almost identical with that of the League of Nations in adopting the Report of the Lytton Commission in March, 1933, which Japan defiantly refused to accept.

As a matter of fact, it cannot have taken long for President Roosevelt to become profoundly disappointed by what Japan did after the Portsmouth Treaty. He was soon to see Japan in secret agreement with Russia,⁵ blocking all efforts toward the development of Manchuria as a world market for international cooperation and trade. He cannot but have been pained to hear of the death of the Korean queen at a time when she was "closely guarded" by Japanese soldiers. He must have been grieved to witness the subjugation of Korea, in defiance of a treaty bearing America's signature.⁶ The permanent silence of President Theodore Roosevelt with regard to his promise to endorse Japan's "Monroe Doctrine" may therefore be held to speak volumes of chagrin and disappointment.

If it has served no other good purpose, the whole Sino-Japanese crisis has at least taught students of international affairs to realize more than ever the importance of being constantly on guard against a too ingenious use of established terms of international usage, and popular reference to such special conditions in international relations as the Monroe Doctrine, the Panama Canal Zone, the American intervention in Mexico, and the British position in Egypt for the justification or

⁴ *Documents Diplomatiques Français*, Paris. Vol. VI, p. 328.

⁵ Japan made secret treaties with Russia in 1907, 1910, 1912 and 1916; see *Lytton Report*, p. 40.

⁶ Article 1. of the Treaty of Amity and Commerce between the United States and the Kingdom of Chosen, May 22nd, 1882 stipulates:

"If other powers deal unjustly or oppressively with either Government, the other will exert their good offices, on being informed of the case, to bring about an amicable arrangement, thus showing their friendly feelings." See Henry Chung, *op. cit.*

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explanation of acts and situations in the Far East, because in many cases the Western nomenclature simply does not fit the Eastern conditions. In this age of ours, when propaganda and camouflage can be so cleverly resorted to, the reading public must refuse to accept declarations and statements at their face value, but must examine the actual facts. It is only thus that it may find the truth.

CHING-CHUN WANG

JELLYFISH AND CRUSTACEAN

IN THE September issue of *PACIFIC AFFAIRS* Mr. Peffer described America as "the Jellyfish of the Pacific." Great Britain can perhaps by analogy be called a crustacean; at least the analogy suggests comparison of the stability of the policies of the two countries.

Mr. Peffer's marine simile implies that the body politic of the United States is amorphous. It contains, he declares, neither aristocracy, peasantry nor proletariat in any effective form; Labor is not a factor in the shaping of foreign policy, and the leaders of industry and finance are lacking in all sense of responsibility outside of their professional sphere. For directive influence the country is thrown back on the "liberal intellectual" who, being devoid of solid convictions, divorced from facts and a prey to sentimentalism, is the "jellyfish." The springs of public opinion in Great Britain are quite different. The aristocracy, represented by the House of Lords, and the proletariat, represented by the Trades Unions and the Parliamentary Labor Party, are powerful influences in the direction of foreign affairs; while the academic intellectual, although not to be called a nonentity, is by no means the paramount figure which he is represented as being in America.

For reasons historical and geographic the English, or perhaps one should rather say the ruling classes in England, have for generations been educated to a practical interest and understanding in foreign affairs. In spite of this the guidance of foreign policy has lain to an exceptional degree in the hands of the Foreign Office professionals; an anomaly explainable perhaps by the number of Foreign Secretaries, before the Great War, who combined a long tenure of office with an unusual degree of public confidence, and to the admittedly high caliber and training of the permanent staff. This esoteric tendency can be illustrated by the case of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, the conception of which,