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The Making of the Monroe Doctrine

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Macmillan in the House of Commons. The point of the affair is that any officer may be and should be removed from command when his superiors have lost confidence in him. But in relieving him care should be taken not to imply wrongdoing, unless, of course, formal proceedings are contemplated or can be supported.

The history of warfare is replete with examples of failure and the lessons that can be learned from them are legion. Arthur Marder has performed an admirable service for military professional officers and scholars alike by presenting concisely and completely the details and explanation of why Operation Menace failed. It could be profitably studied in war colleges as a classic case of how not to conduct a combined operation.

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May, Ernest R. *The Making of the Monroe Doctrine*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975. 306pp.

Contrary to the conclusion of most historians, Ernest R. May argues that the issuance of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 can best be understood "in terms of domestic politics." Rejecting notions of national interest as well as the pressures of international politics, May offers the thesis that "The positions of the policymakers [in the United States] were determined less by conviction than by ambition." In short, competition for the Presidential nomination of 1824 produced the Monroe Doctrine as we know it. The author realizes that his is a provocative position and, from the outset, he admits that "the direct evidence of connections between foreign policy debates and the presidential contest is sparse and ambiguous."

Nevertheless, he urges his readers to follow him on this speculative journey for his goal goes beyond the under-

standing of the Monroe Doctrine to a more general call for American foreign policy analysts to reexamine their assumptions. The motivations of policymakers can be more clearly predicted "by an analysis of their domestic political interests than by analysis of their private beliefs or of the options defined for them by apparent actions or intentions of other nations." While May repeatedly asserts that he has no desire to reduce the decisions of policymakers solely to their political ambitions, the logic and force of his argument, especially in relation to the promulgation of Monroe's Doctrine, leave little room for a more eclectic conclusion.

And May is very persuasive in presenting his case. It is difficult to quibble with his assertion that too few historians have bothered to examine the relationship between domestic politics and the Monroe Doctrine. Nevertheless, he is a little wide of the mark if he insists, as he seems to, that this has been a failing of much of the recent work on American foreign relations. Certainly the outpouring of monographs on the cold war has not been remiss in that regard. However, if Professor May is correct about the motives which led to Monroe's Message, the implications for U.S. Latin American policy are important.

Professor May's interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine is itself based on two underlying assumptions about the Doctrine's intent: First, that it would be aimed at restricting continental powers from recapturing for Spain or for themselves the newly independent, former Spanish colonies in Latin America, and second, that it would state the position of the United States vis-à-vis the Greek revolution. Tied to these two issues was the question whether or not the cabinet would accept the invitation of British Foreign Secretary George Canning to join in a declaration in opposition to the recolonization of Latin America. Unlike other scholars May assumes that the

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Monroe administration was not seriously concerned about the possibility of Russian expansion in the Pacific Northwest.

May begins by examining the views, backgrounds, and political philosophies of the men he considers key to both the Presidential contest of 1824 and the preparation of the Monroe Doctrine: James Monroe, the President; John Quincy Adams, the Secretary of State; William H. Crawford, the Secretary of the Treasury; John C. Calhoun, the Secretary of War; Henry Clay, the Speaker of the House; and Andrew Jackson, the hero of the War of 1812. After this investigation the author admits that "Someone living in 1823, foreseeing the issues the American government would confront, and possessing some information about the values and beliefs of key American politicians, would have been able to make guesses about their positions, but he would have been hesitant to back his guesses with bets."

An examination of the policies of the other powers involved—Russia, England, and France—proves no more enlightening according to May. In a chapter entitled "Foreign Politics" the author offers a succinct and interesting picture of the ideologies and personalities which helped form the foreign policy decisions of these nations. No common policy could emerge among those nations, and, May suggests, none existed within the inner policymaking circles of each power: "In short, the prospective policies of Russia, France, and England set no clear boundaries for the choices to be made in Washington." Less convincing, however, is the author's assertion that "American decision-makers had adequate evidence for a just assessment of the situation abroad. If they chose to make unrealistic estimates of the possible consequences of the options before them, they were rationalizing arguments for courses of action which they preferred for other reasons."

Thus having rejected the notion that American policymakers were motivated by their particular views of national interest or by any other real perception of European dangers to the new world, May is left with the conclusion that the debates and decisions which led to the formulation of Monroe's Message were motivated by the contest for the Presidency.

"The men who constructed the Monroe Doctrine," according to Professor May, were "preoccupied" with the upcoming Presidential election. Among the leading candidates, John Quincy Adams had the most to lose from a "debate over some issue of foreign policy." On the other hand, Henry Clay had the most to gain by contrasting his position as champion of the "recognition of the new Latin American republics" with the more cautious policy of the Monroe administration, which included Clay's three main competitors—Adams, Crawford, and Calhoun—in its ranks. If the Administration chose to accept the British offer of joint opposition to the continental powers, Adams, as Secretary of State, would appear to have returned to supporting discredited Federalist policies, which certainly would not have enhanced his Presidential possibilities. Adams' survival as a viable candidate, according to May, rested upon his ability in "persuading the doubtful that he was patriotic and anti-British . . . and as much a nationalist and as much a partisan frontiersman as was Clay."

Thus in late November Adams convinced a reluctant President not to accept Canning's offer and instead simply to declare that the American continents should "henceforth not be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European Powers." Secondly, while Monroe announced the hope of his government that Greece gain her independence, he pointedly did not extend recognition to that revolutionary government. This action, argues Professor May, avoided another worry for

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the Secretary of State. For if the United States had recognized Greece as independent, Edward Everett, President of Harvard College and, worse, a Federalist, would most likely have been appointed Minister to Greece. If Everett were selected, Adams would be open to the charge of supporting the much maligned party, but if Greece were recognized and Everett not asked to be Minister, the Secretary stood to lose crucial support in New England.

May seems to present a credible case in support of his thesis that the Monroe Doctrine grew more from domestic political considerations than from issues of national interest or from foreign pressures. While I am impressed with the argument, it seems that two assumptions of the author are open to question.

First, May assumes that the Administration had no reason to take seriously Tsar Alexander's Ukase of 1821 which extended the boundary of Russian-America south to 51° latitude and claimed a 100-mile coastal limit for Russia's North American possessions. The Tsar quickly relented, May suggests, because "Alexander seemed to feel a genuine affection for the American republic." Whatever the Tsar's sentiments, he did not agree to suspend the enforcement of his Ukase until after the American Minister to St. Petersburg, Henry Middleton, at Adams' instruction, informed the Russian Foreign Ministry that if the orders were effected the U.S. Government would assume that "a state of war between the two powers exists."

The second assumption is related to the first. By underestimating American-Russian disagreement, especially concerning the Pacific Northwest, May seems to confuse the announcement of the Doctrine in December 1823 with the policy which Monroe and Adams had begun to implement earlier. For instance, on 17 July 1823, about 5 months before Monroe sent his message to the Congress and 1 month before

Canning made his offer of a joint declaration, Adams informed Baron Hendrik de Tuyl, the Russian Minister, that the United States "would contest the right of Russia to any territorial establishment on this continent, and that we should assume distinctly the principle that the American continents are no longer subjects for any new European colonial establishments."

Apparently Alexander did not agree with the Secretary of State and on 15 November Tuyl delivered a note to Adams in which the Tsar, as spokesman for the continental powers, asserted that Russia and her allies would continue in their full support of legitimate regimes, and that they would not be deterred in their efforts to restore to Spain and Portugal their lost colonial holdings. Professor May, however, does not think the Tsar's note should be taken seriously for it was "merely an example of Russia's pious rhetoric." Apparently Secretary of State Adams was more concerned and at the cabinet meeting on 25 November, he and Secretary of War Calhoun argued at length over the proper manner to respond to the Russian message. In fact, no one at that session thought the Tsar's threats should go unanswered. Calhoun suggested that the best vehicle would be the President's annual message. Adams protested arguing that "the communication from the Russian Minister required a direct and explicit answer." For to do so in a message to Congress would be:

... precisely as if a stranger should come to me with a formal and insulting display of his principles in the management of his own family and his conduct toward his neighbors, knowing them to be the opposite of mine, and as if I, instead of turning upon him and answering him face to face, should turn to my own family and discourse to them upon my principles and conduct, with sharp inuendoes upon those

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of the stranger, and then say to him, "There! take that for your answer. And yet you have no right to take notice of it: for it was only said to my family and behind your back."

And on 27 November Adams, having carried the day, informed the Russian Government that the United States would oppose any attempt by European powers to restore to Spain her late colonies. His government, the Secretary informed Alexander, "could not see with indifference the forcible interposition of any European Power, other than Spain, either to restore the dominion of Spain over her emancipated colonies in America, or to establish Monarchical Government in those countries, or to transfer any of the possessions . . . to any other European power."

Clearly, the Secretary of State did not view a Presidential message to the Congress as an effective or as a proper response to a foreign power. Thus, Monroe's Message was an announcement to the American people that the Administration already had taken firm action against those European nations which threatened to restore colonial rule in Latin America and that it had dealt as strongly with Russian designs in the Pacific Northwest. While May is correct in pointing out that the Monroe Doctrine of December 1823 was motivated by domestic political considerations, all Presidential messages to Congress, according to Adams, were supposed to be for that purpose. To be sure, Monroe's announcement aided Adams' Presidential hopes in that it undercut Henry Clay's argument that Adams was weak in his support of Latin American independence and of American interests in the Pacific Northwest. The substance of the policy generally referred to as the Monroe Doctrine, however, had been effected more

quietly and had been begun much earlier through diplomatic, not public, channels.

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Norman, Barbara. *Napoleon and Talleyrand: The Last Two Weeks*. New York: Stein and Day, 1976. 299pp.

When studying the death of empires, historians usually concentrate upon long-term trends and underlying causes leading to the regime's collapse. The collapse itself is usually treated as an inevitable consequence of larger historical forces or as an afterthought. The way in which a regime perishes, however, is often important in and of itself, for its manner of dying influences significantly the options and choices of its successors.

Barbara Norman has written an interesting study of the last days of the Napoleonic regime. She notes that in the spring of 1814, a Bourbon restoration was by no means the inevitable result of Napoleon's defeat. Allied statesmen and French leaders had numerous alternatives including a dictated peace to the Emperor, a regency for Napoleon's son, occupation and partition of France, or replacing Napoleon with Bernadotte, a former marshal and satellite of the Tsar. Thus restoring Bourbon rule was only one of several possible results of Napoleon's defeat.

At this juncture, Talleyrand, a former bishop, former revolutionary, former imperial official and perpetual schemer played a major role in helping the Bourbons to regain their throne. Talleyrand created a provisional government at Paris and convinced many in both the allied and imperial camps that a restoration was the only viable alternative.

Unfortunately, the author says little about Talleyrand's own motives. Did he act as he did because he believed