

HENRY CABOT LODGE: Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, 1912

Source: *Record*, 62 Cong., 2 Sess., p. 10045.

Resolved, that when any harbor or other place in the American continents is so situated that the occupation thereof for naval or military purposes might threaten the communications or the safety of the United States, the government of the United States could not see without grave concern the possession of such harbor or other place by any corporation or association which has such a relation to another government, not American, as to give that government practical power of control for national purposes. . .

This resolution rests on a generally accepted principle of the law of nations, older than the Monroe Doctrine. It rests on the principle that every nation has a right to protect its own safety, and that if it feels that the possession by a foreign power, for military or naval purposes, of any given harbor or place is prejudicial to its safety, it is its duty as well as its right to interfere.

I will instance as an example of what I mean the protest that was made successfully against the occupation of the port of Agadir, in Morocco, by Germany. England objected on the ground that it threatened her communication through the Mediterranean. That view was shared largely by the European powers, and the occupation of that port was prevented in that way. That is the principle upon which the resolution rests.

It has been made necessary by a change of modern conditions, under which, while a government takes no action itself, the possession of an important place of the character I have described may be taken by a corporation or association which would be under the control of the foreign government.

The Monroe Doctrine was, of course, an extension in our own interests of this underlying principle - the right of every nation to provide for its own safety. The Monroe Doctrine, as we all know, was applied, so far as the taking possession of territory was concerned, to its being open to further colonization and naturally did not touch upon the precise point involved here. But without any Monroe Doctrine, the possession of a harbor such as that of Magdalena Bay, which has led to this resolution would render it necessary, I think, to make some declaration covering a case where corporation or association was involved.

In this particular case it became apparent from the inquiries made by the committee and by the administration that no government was concerned in taking possession of Magdalena Bay; but it also became apparent that those persons who held control of the Mexican concession, which included the land about Magdalena Bay, were engaged in negotiations, which have not yet been completed certainly but which have only been tentative, looking to the sale of that bay and the land about it to a corporation either created or authorized by a foreign government or in which the stock was largely held or controlled by foreigners.

The passage of this resolution has seemed to the committee, without division, I think, to be in the interest of peace. It is always desirable to make the position of a country in regard to a question of this kind known beforehand and not to allow a situation to arise in which it might be necessary to urge a friendly power to withdraw when that withdrawal could not be made, perhaps, without some humiliation.

The resolution is merely a statement of policy, allied to the Monroe Doctrine, of course, but not necessarily dependent upon it or growing out of it. When the message came in, I made a statement as to the conditions at Magdalena Bay which had led to the resolution of inquiry and which has now led to the subsequent action of the committee. It seemed to the committee that it was very wise to make this statement of policy at this time, when it can give offense to no one and makes the position of the United States clear.

Of course I need not say to the Senate that the opening of the Panama Canal gives to the question of Magdalena Bay and to that of the Galapagos Islands, which have been once or twice before considered, an importance such as they have never possessed, and I think it eminently desirable in every interest that this resolution should receive the assent of the Senate.