

Brazil, the Original Leader of the Americas – Part II

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On May 30, 1822, Brazil through the “Andrada Doctrine” became the original leader of the Americas. The “Andrada Doctrine” established the foundations of foreign policy issues dealing with the defense of the American continent against European interference in the affairs of the countries of the American hemisphere

On April 22, 2000, Brazil commemorated its 500th anniversary as a country, but September 7, is a very special date for the Brazilian people as well, it is the date that they commemorate the “Independence Day” of Brazil. September 7, 2022, which is around the corner, is the date when Brazilians will commemorate the 200th year of the independence of Brazil.

I was happy to see on the September 15, 2004 issue of the Financial Times of London, that the feature article was about Brazil – “Selling Brazil: the eternal country of the future comes of age on the global stage.” By Raymond Colitt and Richard Lapper.

The article gives a glowing description of today’s Brazilian economy. It seems to me that Brazil is finding that future that has eluded it for so long. Finally, the future is looking great for Brazil, and the Brazilian people.

Today, most Brazilians don’t appreciate it, but in the past Brazil had its historical moments of leadership in the Americas. Brazil became the original leader of the Americas in the early 1800’s under the leadership of José Bonifácio and his “Andrada Doctrine.” Here is some historical information regarding Brazilian leadership of the Americas.

Prince Dom Pedro’s Greatest Accomplishment

On April 26, 1821, when King João VI left Pedro, his son, as the Prince Regent of Brazil, the Prince was only 22 years old and lacked any formal education. He always disliked studying, and since he arrived in Brazil in 1808, he spent most of his time riding horses and playing with his bulls.

The greatest accomplishment of Dom Pedro’s life (the Prince Regent) in regard to Brazil, was to appoint José Bonifácio his Prime Minister, and not hesitating in arming José Bonifácio with unlimited authority to do his job.

When Prince Dom Pedro asked José Bonifácio to be his Prime Minister in 1822, the Prince Regent was aware that he could not find a more qualified person for that job in Brazil. José Bonifácio told the Prince Regent that he would accept the position only when allowed to impose his unlimited authority.

Dom Pedro did not hesitate. He armed José Bonifácio with the highest level of authority possible. The investiture of José Bonifácio carried with it the most extensive powers that any minister had in the history of the imperial or republican Brazil.

José Bonifácio as Prime Minister - January 17, 1822

José Bonifácio was aware of the disintegration of the Spanish empire in the Americas starting with the independence of Paraguay in 1811. Spanish America disintegrated into eight separate and independent countries during the period 1810 to 1830.

Spanish America broke up into various republics and their year of independence was as follows: Paraguay (1811), Argentina (1816), Chile (1818), Colombia (1819), Ecuador (1822), Peru (1824), Bolivia (1825), and Venezuela (1830).

The independence of these countries from Spain was accomplished with a twenty-year civil war in that region of South America and split Spanish America into eight independent republics. Uruguay got its independence in 1828 from Brazil.

Emperor Dom Pedro I lost the Cisplatine Province — the country called "Uruguay" today, in a disastrous war with Argentina in 1828. If Emperor Dom Pedro I had kept José Bonifácio as his Prime Minister in the late 1820's, instead of sending him into exile, most likely the country Uruguay still would be part of Brazil today.

The Andrada Doctrine

In May 30, 1822, Brazil through the "Andrada Doctrine" became the original leader of the Americas regarding foreign policy issues dealing with the defense of the American continent against European interference in the affairs of the countries of the American hemisphere. Here is the actual history of Brazilian leadership in the Americas.

José Bonifácio's decisions projected a firm, decisive and powerful image of his administration also in his foreign policy. In his diplomatic letter to the American Consul Mr. P. Sartoris in Rio de Janeiro in which he appointed a diplomat to represent Brazil in the United States, José Bonifácio wrote:

"Dear Sir: Brazil is a nation and will take its place as such, without expecting or requesting its recognition by the other world powers. We will send them representatives of our nation. Those nations who receive and deal with them in that capacity will continue to be allowed to use our ports and their commerce will receive favorable status.

"The nations that refuse our diplomats will be excluded from our ports and commerce. This is our frank and firm politics." He also sent a similar letter to the other representatives of the major European powers, including a letter to Chamberlain, the English representative in Brazil.

José Bonifácio also formulated international foreign policy for the hemisphere with the tendency to protect other American nations that had aspirations of political emancipation.

In his instructions to the Brazilian diplomat representing Brazil in Buenos Aires, José Bonifácio in his diplomatic correspondence dated May 30, 1822, wrote:

"After you have skillfully persuaded that the interests of this Kingdom are the same as that of the other States of this hemisphere, and of the part that they will play in our destinies, you will promise them from our country the solemn recognition of the political independence of these governments and you will lay out the incalculable utilities which can result from us forming together a Confederation in a form of a treaty with Brazil, for defensive and offensive purposes, to go together with the other governments of the Spanish America against the extraordinary European manipulations.

As per instructions from José Bonifácio, the Brazilian diplomat representing Brazil in Buenos Aires, also got in contact with the other South American governments regarding this foreign policy treaty. The "Andrada Doctrine" was the original document that laid out the foreign policy structure for the Americas.

The "Andrada Doctrine" precedes by 18 months, and it is more precise and more courageous than the "Monroe Doctrine" laid out by the United States President in his message to Congress in December 2, 1823.

There is a certain resemblance between both doctrines, but we have to recognize and give credit to José Bonifácio for being the first to expose his thoughts and making a policy in that regard for the entire hemisphere.

José Bonifácio preceded the American President James Monroe in formulating foreign policy for the American hemisphere by more than one and a half years.

The Monroe Doctrine

I have seen a number of times over the years people quoting the "Monroe Doctrine" in written articles in major US newspapers and magazines, and also on television programs.

The American history books, written from an American history perspective, usually mention the Monroe Doctrine as an important American contribution to setting up foreign policy for the Americas.

Usually, they are trying to imply that the Monroe administration was the first administration of any country in the Americas to establish foreign policy for the Americas not allowing any new European colonies in the Americas, and European powers were not to interfere in the affairs of the countries of the American hemisphere.

President James Monroe in his seventh annual address to the U.S. Congress on Dec. 2, 1823, made a statement that eventually became one of the foundations of US policy in Latin America. Monroe's statement initially remained only a declaration of policy; its increasing use and popularity elevated it to a principle, slowly becoming in the mid-1840's what we call today the Monroe Doctrine.

Responding to Russian territorial claims along the northern Pacific coast, and concerned that European nations would attempt to seize recently independent Latin American countries, President James Monroe announced a new national policy. No new colonies would be allowed in the Americas, and European powers were not to interfere in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere. Here is a list of some key points of that document:

"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....declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.

Our policy in regard to Europe... remains the same, which is, not to interfere in the internal concerns of any of its powers..."

In his pronouncements, Monroe asserted that European powers could no longer colonize the American continents and that they should not interfere with the newly independent Spanish American republics.

He specifically warned Europeans against attempting to impose monarchy on independent American nations but added that the US would not interfere in existing European colonies or in Europe itself.

He rejected the European political system of monarchy, believing that no American nation would adopt it and that its presence anywhere in the western hemisphere endangered the peace and safety of the young United States.

Despite the boldness of his assertions, Monroe provided no means to ensure the enforcement of his ideas, and as far as the US was concerned, the Monroe Doctrine meant little until the 1840s, when President James Polk used it to justify US expansion.

In 1845 he invoked the doctrine against British threats in California and Oregon, as well as against French and British efforts to prevent the US annexation of Texas.

As a component of foreign policy, the Monroe Doctrine has had considerable effect and has had strong support in the US, in part because it promoted US interests. The doctrine has served other American nations too, particularly because it asserts their right to independence.

Because the doctrine as originally formulated made no clear distinction between the interests of the US and those of its neighbors, however, the US has used it to justify intervention in the internal affairs of other American nations.

Given growing US anxiety about the unstable politics of Latin American countries, intervention in a number of occasions has been especially prevalent and controversial in the last 100 years.

Note: The sources for the above information are:

Most of the information regarding President James Monroe and The Monroe Doctrine were compiled from a number of United States history and US government websites.

Most of the above information regarding José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva came from the book: "José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva - The Greatest Man in Brazilian History" by Ricardo C. Amaral

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