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## The Effects of the War on our Latin-American Relations (Part II)

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The Effects of the War  
on  
Our Latin-American Relations.

Huntington Wilson

II

Turning from the opportunity to the lesson, from the commercial and economic aspects of this question to those that are political in the large sense, one's imagination is appalled at the potentialities of the yet unknown results of so vast an upheaval. Yet we must envisage some of these if we are to be prepared for their effect upon us. We must be ready for the impact of the resultant forces of these great dynamics. We must be ready everywhere, but nowhere more than in our relations with Latin-America, in the zone of the Caribbean, and wherever the Monroe Doctrine as still interpreted gives us a varying degree of responsibility.

A good foreign office is said to keep a man at the front door to answer all hypothetical questions; but it is safe to say that a good foreign minister must ask himself many such, and common prudence assuredly suggests many at this time to the United States.

The war's first effect upon our Latin-American relations is to compel through commercial and financial rapprochement a larger measure of material interdependence, more contact, and we may hope a substitution of knowledge for the former reciprocity of ignorance. All this makes for better social and intellectual relations, good understanding and friendship, and so for political relations much more substantial in the case of many of the republics than the rather flimsy Pan-Americanism celebrated in eloquent speeches and futile international conferences. There is little in Pan-Americanism of that kind. The "raza Latina" of eloquence is not itself homogeneous; still less so is the population of the whole hemisphere. And with Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, and Santiago, we have, of course, far less propinquity than we have with the capitals of Europe. But what we really can do is to build up, especially with the nearer republics, real ties of common interest and good neighborhood, and with the distant ones ties of commerce and esteem. The war may tend to cure

certain rather self-centered countries of affecting the morbid view that the people of the United States are lying awake nights contriving to devour them, when in fact in most such cases it would be hard to find in a crowded street in the United States that one in a thousand of the passersby knew more than the name, at most, of one of those very few countries referred to. Europe's preoccupation with the war temporarily deprives such a country and its few misguided prophets, whose monomania is dread of that chimera the "Colossus of the North", of the pastime of nestling up to Europe in the hope of annoying us. It postpones, too, the hope of the morbid ones that we shall come to war with a powerful enemy. Now, perhaps, even these will appreciate the remark of a diplomatist of a certain weak country in contact with European Powers, who once said: "If we only had the United States for a neighbor! What I can't understand is that your neighbors do not realize their good luck". Turning from these exceptional phenomena, the very fact of the war leaves the United States in a general position of greater political prestige.

Whatever the upshot of the European tragedy, its political and psychological consequences are likely to be great. If it result in new national divisions upon racial lines of more reality, who knows but that the awakened spirits of nationality will germinate fresh military ambitions? Or will the horrors of the war force political reforms and the search for assurance in more democratic institutions against any repetition of those horrors? And is popular government an assurance against useless war while men remain warlike even when not military? Except from the successful countries or from those where disaster has brought such sobering change that men can return to work heartened with new hope, when the war is over there is likely to be a heavy emigration of disgusted people. Possibly even victory will be so dear that men will emigrate from a country half prostrate in its triumph. Many will come as the Puritans came, and as the bulk of our own excellent Germanic element came, and will cast in their lot with a new nation. We shall get a <sup>good</sup> ~~new~~ share, but

doubtless some will go to the republics of the far South, and some to the highlands of the tropics and through the Canal to the West Coast. If so, this will tend gradually toward increased production and purchasing power, as well as toward a leavening of social, political, and economic conditions of life.

If the war were indecisive or left all the combatants more or less prostrated, peaceful immigration might give a big impulse to the gradual growing up of powerful States in the temperate zone of the extreme South. The situation there, and the evolution of our own power, make it perhaps even now fair to consider the question of regarding as optional in any <sup>given</sup> case the assertion by us of the Monroe Doctrine much below the Equator, let us say, beyond which it may possibly be doubtful whether we have nowadays much reason for special interest. But even so, our relations to South America and our obligations under the Monroe Doctrine, in spite of the blessed fortifications of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, leave us where it is tempting fate to be without a navy of the first magnitude, and a big merchant marine. We have seen what happened to Belgium and Luxembourg. We have seen how even some of the most enlightened nations can still make force their god. Nations learn slowly, and there are perhaps some new big ones coming on, like China. As Norman Angell, a very judicious peace advocate, lays down, if all the peace doctrines are true, nevertheless it would be madness to go unarmed until all nations believed them and could be relied upon to act up to them. The war's lesson to us is that a very big navy, and a very good diplomacy, rather than a lot of idealistic dogmas and treaties, are the only safety for us in our Latin-American <sup>relations and</sup> ~~obligations~~ and their obligations.

If the war is a fight to a finish, and the allies triumph, we can imagine Russia, with its teeming millions of people, occupied for a while in the Near East; Japan consolidating her position in the Far East, an increasingly powerful neighbor to us in the Philippines, the Hawaiian Islands and the Pacific Ocean; France

still a great Power; and England as a world Power of uncomfortably ubiquitous strength, able to challenge the Monroe Doctrine at will. Or, let us suppose that Germany should triumph and that German emigration should swarm into the Caribbean countries, or into Brazil or some other country where there is already a large German colony, - elated, triumphant Germans, not Germans disgusted by a disastrous war. Would Germany be likely to heed the Monroe Doctrine, or would it be only another "scrap of paper"? And consider the dangerously preponderant world power that would be Germany's! The Canadian neighborhood, the kinship, the racial or language congeniality, might enable us always to get on with the British, and conceivably some day to cooperate in a proper case with them, and perhaps others, in putting force at the service of peaceful aspiration. Upon this hypothesis no less, we have the same naval necessities while we quietly cultivate our general interests and our Latin-American relations, and maintain a conservative aloofness from commitments which may be proposed as a result of Europe's self-inflicted tragedy.

In the present stage of civilization the safety of America should not be left dependent upon the forbearance of any Power that may emerge dangerously strong from the war or that may otherwise arise. The obligations and rights of our Latin-American relations, under the Monroe Doctrine and otherwise, like our security and our efficiency as a force for peace and good in the world, demand a big navy, a merchant marine, and the self-discipline and safeguard of adequate military preparedness. The need of these and of a diplomacy of intelligent self-interest, continuity, and intense nationalism, is the lesson brought home to us by the European war in its effects upon our Latin-American relations as well as upon our general position as a great Power.

Caracas, November 21, 1914.