

# Another Reason for Washington in Venezuela?

## Monroe Doctrine: “This Country is in Our Hemisphere”

By [F. William Engdahl](#)

Global Research, March 14, 2019

Region: [Latin America & Caribbean](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Media Disinformation](#)

*Many myself among them have pointed to the vast hydrocarbon reserves of Venezuela as a possible driving motive behind the otherwise bizarre Washington intervention in Venezuela. The more I look into the situation, the more I suspect a quite other explanation for the intervention from a President who campaigned on a call to end US regime change interventions into other countries. The President's NSC advisor, John Bolton openly stated it was about the oil. Could there be another reason as well? What then could it be?*

Bolton also [declared](#) recently,

“In this administration, we're not afraid to use the word Monroe Doctrine. This is a country in our hemisphere.”

The last President to invoke the Monroe Doctrine, something going back to 1823, was Ronald Reagan. Before Reagan, JFK did so to justify US measures against the growing influence of the Soviet Union in the region after the Bay of Pigs fiasco.

The Monroe Doctrine was drafted by US Secretary of State John Quincy Adams and proclaimed in the State of the Union address by President James Monroe at a point most all South American colonial nations had achieved independence from Spain or Portugal. It declared that any attempts by European powers to try to establish new colonies there would be considered by Washington as “the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States.” In effect it declared that the New World would be a separate sphere of influence from that of the colonial Old World of Europe. Notably, the immediate trigger for the 1823 declaration was a Russian Ukase of 1821 asserting rights to the Pacific Northwest and forbidding non-Russian ships from approaching the coast.

Historically the original Monroe Doctrine was largely a bluff, as the US at the time had no serious navy and relied on the British Royal Navy informally to keep other powers out. What then could be the basis of invoking the Monroe Doctrine in 2019, nearly 200 years later?

Target China?

Given the track record in brutal regime change of US operators such as Elliott Abrams and others in the present effort to oust President Maduro in favor of Assembly President Juan Guaidó as interim president, it seems something other than supporting free and fair elections is involved to put it mildly. If we look at the role of foreign governments not only in

Venezuela but in the broader region as a possible US motive, what comes into focus is the potential and very significant presence of China and its economic stake in Venezuela and the entire region, one receiving little attention to date.

It's widely known that China wants security of supplies for its oil and draws from a wide variety of countries for that from Iran to Russia, from Saudi Arabia to Angola. And from Venezuela.

China is a, in fact the major creditor to the Venezuela Maduro regime, perhaps as much as \$61 billion worth of loans by some estimates. Since the Washington declarations in support of Guaido, China has been unusually outspoken in defense of Maduro, unusual for a state that claims never to involve in local politics. What is not public is what detailed agreements China has from Maduro in return for being Venezuela's main financial supporter. Are there concessions to Venezuela's rich untapped deposits of gold or of rare earth minerals such as Coltan?

Coltan, sometimes called "blue gold," has been confirmed in the Amazon region of Venezuela near the border to Brazil and Guyana, of an estimated \$100 billion worth. Coltan is the source for tantalum which sometimes is priced higher than gold.

Tantalum is a metal used in capacitors that store energy in modern electronics like smart phones and tablets. Tantalum capacitors are also essential in powering modern military weaponry because the metal resists corrosion and can withstand the extreme temperatures generated by the new military applications. Without it, weapons systems would overheat.

The US relies on tantalum to build the basic circuitry in guidance control systems in smart bombs, the on-board navigational systems in drones, anti-tank systems, robots and most weapons systems.

The metal is vital to US defense. Yet, it has no domestic mines to mine coltan. According to the US Geological Survey most of world tantalum from coltan today comes from Rwanda and Congo in Africa followed by Brazil, Nigeria and China. In terms of tantalum reserves, Australia is world largest and its major tantalum-coltan mine, the Bald Hill lithium-tantalum mine in Western Australia, opened in 2018 with its total output pledged to a [Hong Kong company](#).

Gold is another huge untapped resource in Venezuela estimated at some 15,500 tons. But this alone does not explain the US intervention.

#### Guyana Infrastructure

If we add to China's major Venezuela presence the fact that China also signed neighbor Guyana to its Belt, Road Initiative in 2018, it begins to take on a larger dimension than mere oil supply lines or tantalum sources. Chinese companies and money are presently building a highway link from Manaus in Northern Brazil through Guyana, giving Brazil far more efficient access to the Panama Canal, cutting thousands of miles off the [shipping route](#). Talks are reportedly also underway for China to build a deep-water port in Guyana's northern coast to link to China's highway to the Brazil Amazon region bordering Venezuela, with its vast untapped mineral riches. People in Guyana say the road-port will benefit China far more than Guyana. It would enable efficient ship transport from the Amazon through the Panama Canal to China.

A recent report from the Washington CSIS think tank describes what larger design China seems to be engaged in around its Venezuela presence. Author Evan Ellis states, "In South America, a transcontinental infrastructure that includes a network of highways, train, and river routes will connect Brazil to the Atlantic, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. Such connections will probably include train linkages across the Amazon to Peru's northern coast, and a more southerly train route through Bolivia to southern Peru and northern Chile."

Notable also are Chinese efforts in Panama, the central shipping crossing between Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. In 2016 China's Landbridge Group bought Panama's Margarita Island Port, the largest port, on the canal's Atlantic side, giving the Chinese company intimate access to one of the most important goods distribution centers in the world.

With China deeply engaged in Venezuela, Guyana, and Brazil as well as owning Panama's largest port, it can well be that Washington believes that by forcing China to dramatically scale back its presence in Maduro's Venezuela, pressure on China to scale back her global strategic agenda could markedly increase. That would add to the pressure that is coming over US sanctions on Iran, another major oil source for China. A Washington policy, undeclared, of strategic denial to China in Venezuela would fit with the remarks of John Bolton in citing the Monroe Doctrine. If so the target is not so much Maduro and his alleged dictatorship, but its growing dependence on China and China's growing geopolitical ambitions in South America.

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*F. William Engdahl is strategic risk consultant and lecturer, he holds a degree in politics from Princeton University and is a best-selling author on oil and geopolitics, exclusively for the online magazine ["New Eastern Outlook"](#) where this article was originally published. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.*

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Author Name: F. William Engdahl

ISBN Number: 978-0-937147-2-2

Year: 2007

Pages: 341 pages with complete index

List Price: ~~\$25.95~~

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