

# The Principle of National Sovereignty in an Era of 'Regime Change'

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*John Quincy Adams (Secretary of State 1817-1825)*

Venezuela today brings to the forefront of discussion and debate the fundamental principle of national sovereignty. That the neo-cons infesting the Trump administration have been allowed to threaten the sovereignty of the Venezuela nation-state, under a President, himself under the threat of a coup, must not only raise a protest, but must also provide us the opportunity to define more precisely that principle of national sovereignty. For it is not only the well-being of Venezuela that is threatened, but the continued toleration of 'regime-change' threatens throwing civilization itself into a dark age of unending wars and chaos. The end of the road, then, can be nuclear war.

No one has defined that principle of sovereignty better than America's greatest Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams (1817-1825).

Adams, and the United States, faced in the first half of the nineteenth century, a world dominated by empires; empires that, especially led by the rapacious British empire, not only saw the "upstart republic" as a threat and an insult to the world led by an oligarchy, but was also determined to stamp out of existence that republic before the inspiration it provided to the empire's colonies all over the world could lead to more like it.

That the British empire has never accepted even the existence of the United States is not a secret from anyone, except those who do not wish to know that fact, and, perhaps, most Americans today can be excused for not understanding that.. But, for the best of the American patriots of the nineteenth century, they knew it well, and acted to build the United States to become an unassailable bulwark for the idea that the only legitimate foundation of government is that it must represent all the people and ensure

their general welfare.

Below, Adams will speak to you from two centuries ago. His oration of July 4, 1821, celebrating the Declaration of Independence, made the following principled arguments:

*That the British Empire governed themselves by a race of kings, whose title to sovereignty had originally been founded on conquest.*

*That with the Declaration of Independence, the United States demolished at a stroke the lawfulness of all governments founded upon conquest.*

*After fifty years the United States has, without a single exception, respected the independence of other nations, while asserting and maintaining her own.*

*That the United States does not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own.*

*That by involving itself in the internal affairs of other nations, the United States would destroy its own reason of existence; the fundamental maxims of her policy would become, then, no different than the empire America's revolution defeated. It would be, then, no longer the ruler of itself, but the dictator of the world.*

*America's march is the march of mind, not of conquest.*

“Colonial establishments”, he said, “are engines of wrong, and that in the progress of social improvement it will be the duty of the human family to abolish them”.

In his nearly 70 years of service to the nation he acted upon the principle that no nation that did not, at least attempt, to embrace those same principles was not a nation that the United States could join with in a “community of principle.”

That the United States has violated the principles established by John Quincy Adams, beginning with the Mexican-American War of 1846 (against which he led the opposition to as a member of Congress), is not in question here. Our argument is that the potential for the nation to return to those principles has the opportunity to do so with the Presidency of Donald Trump, who denounces the regime change wars of his predecessors often, and with force, and despite the neo-cons in his administration, regularly denounces them. Whether that potential is realized is in the hands of the American people.

## **John Quincy Adams States the Principles of Natural Law**

Excerpts from the Fourth-of-July speech of 1821 by John Quincy Adams in Washington, D.C:

*“Fellow Citizens, UNTIL within a few days before that which we have again assembled to commemorate, our fathers, the people of this Union, had constituted a portion of the British nation; a nation, renowned in arts and arms, who, from a small Island in the Atlantic ocean, had extended their dominion over considerable parts of every quarter of the globe. Governed themselves by a race of kings, whose title to sovereignty had originally been founded on conquest, spell-bound, for a succession of ages, under that portentous system of despotism and of superstition which, in the name of the meek and humble Jesus, had been spread over the christian world, the history of this nation had, for a period of seven hundred years, from the days of the conquest till our own, exhibited a conflict almost continued, between the oppressions of power and the claims of right. In the theories of the crown and the mitre, man had no rights. Neither the body nor the soul of the individual was his own. From the impenetrable gloom of this intellectual darkness, and the deep degradation of this servitude, the British nation had partially emerged. The martyrs of religious freedom had consumed to ashes at the stake; the champions of temporal liberty had bowed their heads upon the scaffold; and the spirits*

*of many a bloody day had left their earthly vesture upon the field of battle, and soared to plead the cause of liberty before the throne of heaven. Through long ages of civil war the people of Britain had extorted from their tyrants, not acknowledgments, but grants of right. With this concession they had been content to stop in the progress of human improvement. They received their freedom, as a donation from their sovereigns. They appealed for their privileges to a sign manual and a seal. They held their title to liberty, like their title to lands, from the bounty of a man, and in their moral and political chronology, the great charter of Runnimead was the beginning of the world.*

*“The interest, which in this paper has survived the occasion upon which it was issued; the interest which is of every age and every clime; the interest which quickens with the lapse of years, spreads as it grows old, and brightens as it recedes, is in the principles which it proclaims. It was the first solemn declaration by a nation of the only legitimate foundation of civil government. It was the corner stone of a new fabric, destined to cover the surface of the globe. It demolished at a stroke the lawfulness of all governments founded upon conquest. It swept away all the rubbish of accumulated centuries of servitude. It announced in practical form to the world the transcendent truth of the unalienable sovereignty of the people. It proved that the social compact was no figment of the imagination; but a real, solid, and sacred bond of the social union. From the day of this declaration, the people of North America were no longer the fragment of a distant empire, imploring justice and mercy from an inexorable master in another hemisphere. They were no longer children appealing in vain to the sympathies of a heartless mother; no longer subjects leaning upon the shattered columns of royal promises, and invoking the faith of parchment to secure their rights. They were a nation, asserting as of right, and maintaining by war, its own existence. A nation was born in a day.*

*“And now, friends and countrymen, if the wise and learned philosophers of the older world, the first observers of mutation and aberration, the discoverers of maddening ether and invisible planets, the inventors of Congreve rockets and shrapnel shells, should find their hearts disposed to inquire, what has America done for the benefit of mankind? let our answer be this—America, with the same voice which spoke herself into existence as a nation, proclaimed to mankind the inextinguishable rights of human nature, and the only lawful foundations of government. America, in the assembly of nations, since her admission among them, has invariably, though often fruitlessly, held forth to them the hand of honest friendship, of equal freedom, of generous reciprocity. She has uniformly spoken among them, though often to heedless and often to disdainful ears, the language of equal liberty, equal justice, and equal rights. She has, in the lapse of nearly half a century, without a single exception, respected the independence of other nations, while asserting and maintaining her own. She has abstained from interference in the concerns of others, even when the conflict has been for principles to which she clings, as to the last vital drop that visits the heart. She has seen that probably for centuries to come, all the contests of that Aceldama, the European World, will be contests between inveterate power, and emerging right.*

*“Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own. She will recommend the general cause, by the countenance of her voice, and the benignant sympathy of her example. She well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself, beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy, and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom. The fundamental maxims of her policy would insensibly change from liberty to force. The frontlet upon her brows would no longer beam with the ineffable splendor of freedom and independence; but in its stead would soon be substituted an imperial diadem, flashing in false and tarnished lustre the murky radiance of dominion and power. She might*

*become the dictatress of the world: she would be no longer the ruler of her own spirit....*

*“Her glory is not dominion, but liberty. Her march is the march of mind. She has a spear and a shield; but the motto upon her shield is Freedom, Independence, Peace. This has been her declaration: this has been, as far as her necessary intercourse with the rest of mankind would permit, her practice.”*

Further, Adams said in that speech, that colonial establishments “are incompatible with the essential character of our institutions,” and concluded, “that great colonial establishments are engines of wrong, and that in the progress of social improvement it will be the duty of the human family to abolish them, as they are now endeavoring to abolish the slave trade.”