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Tate Sanders

Western Oregon University, tsanders12@wou.mail.edu

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The Monroe Doctrine: Openly Defensive (1800-1824)

By

Tate Sanders

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**Readers
Professor Rector
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Imperialism has been an oft used word to describe the United States' role in the world. Concerning American foreign policy throughout its history, two overall camps have formed; one sides with identifying imperialistic tendencies on the part of America and the other argues this is overblown, even nonsense. One flash point is the Monroe Doctrine and its implications, with the former camp using it as a case study for early American imperialism and the other arguing it was created to defend American interests and ideals, while attempting to prevent European encroachment in the Western Hemisphere. When looking at the Doctrine after its original declaration, an argument can be made of its use in America's expansion of influence, particularly during the early twentieth century (i.e., the Roosevelt Corollary). In regards to the actual Doctrine however, this is a fairly myopic view, totally discounting the time in which the Monroe Doctrine was written and declared to the world, which was very defensive and idealistic in nature. This reasoning can be supported with several points. The Founders, including President Monroe, had broken away from an imperial power and were against imperialism. Europe was in the midst of great upheaval, still recovering from the Napoleonic Wars and threatening liberal institutions. Latin America was aflame in revolution, shaking off the yolk of Spain, potentially finding Europe back at their doorstep. There was plenty of reason for the Monroe cabinet to feel defensive, rather than imperial, about American ideals and interests leading up to 1823.

As with many things concerning foreign policy, the Monroe Doctrine was not created in a vacuum with a simplistic world surrounding it. Going back to approximately 1800, with some brief and early mentions to instances before the new century, this work addresses what went into the reasoning and imperativeness for the Doctrine to be put before the world. After a brief overview of the document and review of the literature surrounding it, the backgrounds of the two most important men behind this pivotal document, James Monroe and John Quincy Adams, are explored. The Doctrine was aimed at the potential interference in the Americas, so the old order in Europe is delved into, particularly: Metternich, Tsar Alexander I and the Holy Alliance. Latin America and their relations with United States are explored, with the U.S. believing the newfound republics to be importance to the former's political and diplomatic position, not to mention ideals. Finally, the American perspective is given great detail, much of which

was under the shadow of Great Britain. Going from the Jay Treaty, to the War of 1812, all the way to the Monroe Doctrine unveiling in December 1823, this is given the bulk of analysis. The ultimate primer for making such a doctrine was prompted by the letter of British Foreign Secretary George Canning to the American minister in London. This wraps a up whirlwind of events occurring domestically and internationally to put pressure on President Monroe to create and openly declare his foreign policy with boldness in 1823, which is now known as the Monroe Doctrine.

In making a brief review of the Monroe Doctrine, it was written as a direct repudiation of future European colonization and calling for a policy of noninterference from the Europeans in the young Latin American republics. After making brief mention of negotiations with the Russian and British governments, the Doctrine clearly states,

As a principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that 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. . .¹

It continues to reassert the independence of the republics throughout, telling the Europeans they may keep their current colonies, but no new ones must rise. There is also a call for neutrality among not only among the European governments, but declaring the U.S. government would remain so as well. Finally, there is no doubt about which side the United States took in a potential future struggle in Latin America.

It was stated at the commencement of the last session that a great effort was then making in Spain and Portugal to improve the condition of the people of those countries... The citizens of the United States cherish sentiments the most friendly in favor of the liberty and happiness of their fellow-men on that side of the Atlantic.²

While the United States was hardly a robust military power at this point in history, it is interesting to note the boldness and idealism coming from the Monroe Doctrine. Yet this has not dulled the debate as to whether this statement of principles and ideals was a straightforward declaration, or a cover for future American imperialism.

It would be easy to say the Monroe Doctrine was a quiet opening salvo, from which the United

¹ Appendix A: "Transcript of Monroe Doctrine."

² Ibid.

States was going to begin her own empire in the shadows of Europe. This is supported by Jay Sexton, a more recent scholar on the subject. In the introduction to his book, he immediately discusses how the Doctrine was both a document to push away potential colonial powers, but also “within it lurked the imperial ambitions of the expansionist United States.”³ He goes on further, by saying how paradoxical the Doctrine is, hinting that even though he sees this as the beginning of a subtle imperialist ploy, there were still defensive objectives at play.⁴ Meanwhile, Dexter Perkins, is far more in line with the defensive nature of the Doctrine. While he disavows perceived misconceptions of the Monroe Doctrine, such as it was welcomed sign from Latin America or that it “prevented the reconquest of South America,”⁵ Perkins remains more grounded. Rather than looking for proverbial imperialist monsters to slay, Perkins is content to take more of direct approach to the Monroe Doctrine, seeing it as declaration of non-entanglement and separating America from Europe.⁶ Ernest May looks directly at the men who shaped the Monroe Doctrine. He believes that they were shaped by one of three motives: national interest, international politics, or domestic politics.⁷ He tends to lean towards the last, but is still open-minded enough to admit he is not totally sure as to if this is completely definite or not.⁸ While important to view the inner workings of the United States during this early nineteenth century period, the world at large was still moving too.

Leading up to Monroe Doctrine’s declaration in 1823, one must look back the changes going on in Latin America and Europe, during this crucial period for the United States during the early nineteenth century. Latin America was of great concern to the United States around 1808, due in large part that American commerce with the region had greatly expanded in the prior decade.⁹ Arthur Preston Whitaker

³ Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and nation in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), 3.

⁴ *Ibid*, 3-4.

⁵ Dexter Perkins, *Hands Off: A History of the Monroe Doctrine* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1948), x.

⁶ *Ibid*, 4-5.

⁷ Ernest May, *The Making of the Monroe Doctrine* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press), ix-x.

⁸ *Ibid*, x.

⁹ Arthur Preston Whitaker, *The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 1800-1830* (New York: Russell & Russell Inc.), 2.

goes into detail of how Latin America and the United States were becoming closer in their relations during and after the exploits of Napoleon. The United States after the Latin American uprisings had even firmer economic and diplomatic ties in the region, which had been far more isolated when it had been under Spanish rule.¹⁰ In regards to the European powers' intrigue in Latin America and disregard for liberalism (e.g., republicanism, exemplified by the United States), this is crucial to understanding the post-Napoleonic political landscape. As the 1820s began, the once liberal Tsar Alexander I was now absolutist and reactionary in response to revolutions throughout Europe.¹¹ Hiroo Nakajima provides this as the precursor to American nervousness about this change of heart. The Monroe Doctrine was also a warning to Russia to not expand into what it is the Pacific Northwest in the early 1820s.¹² There was American concern with the Holy Alliance, which Russia was a part of. Henry A. Delfiner explores the Holy Alliance, which potentially threatened the new Latin American republics and the United States. Driven in large part by the Austrian foreign minister Metternich, the Holy Alliance was against the ideals of liberalism and republicanism, actions taken by its members in the 1810s and 1820s supporting this.¹³ The U.S. was in constant worry that the Holy Alliance had future designs in Latin America. This sets the international stage in which Monroe's government felt compelled to take a stand.

The Major Players: James Monroe and John Quincy Adams

International moving documents and doctrines do not just come out of thin air, or from theoretical discussions in the salon. They are created by the men who are in the arena and in the case of the Monroe Doctrine, it was President James Monroe and then-Secretary of State John Quincy Adams. Looking at where both men came from and what drove them is key to understanding the Doctrine. When viewing both American icons, it was not imperialism that drove them, but national interest and defense of liberal ideals is what gave these men purpose in their lives. The Monroe Doctrine embodies much of what

¹⁰ Ibid, xiii.

¹¹ Hiroo Nakajima, "The Monroe Doctrine and Russia: American Views of Czar Alexander I and Their Influence upon Early Russian-American Relations," *Diplomatic History* 31, no. 3 (Jun. 2007): 439.

¹² Ibid, 441.

¹³ Henry A. Delfiner, "'Alexander I, The Holy Alliance and Clemens Metternich: A Reappraisal,'" *East European Quarterly*, XXXVII, no. 2 (Jun. 2003): 145.

both Monroe and Adams, which was indicative of what the United States stood for.

James Monroe is found to be a simple man, yet he is a truly revolutionary figure in both American history and foreign policy. Born in Virginia to a father described as a “patriot,” for his reaction to the Stamp Act, and nephew to a judge who was co-creator of Virginia’s Constitution, Monroe was a man steeped in American patriotism from a young age.¹⁴ He was described to have “resembled his uncle in many ways—reflective, never rushing conclusions but forming opinions deliberately. The same tact, warmth, patience in human relations, so pronounced in the judge’s character, were equally apparent in the nephew.”¹⁵ These traits would serve Monroe not only when he was drafting his Doctrine, but in his near future too. He joined the Continental Army under George Washington in May of 1776 as a lieutenant.¹⁶ His greatest moment in the Revolution was at the Battle of Trenton on Christmas Day, 1776, in which Lieutenant Monroe distinguished himself in battle, but received a crippling shoulder wound.¹⁷ Unfortunately due to this and needs back in his home state of Virginia, Monroe was basically sidelined the rest of the war.¹⁸ Despite this disappointment, Monroe became a driven man in the field of national security, no doubt due to his military background.

After briefly falling into the background, Monroe became a pivotal figure in American politics. In 1790, he became a Senator from Virginia for the newly minted U.S. Senate, the body dealing with foreign affairs in the Congress.¹⁹ Monroe’s Republican bona fides allowed him to receive nomination to become the minister to France when the post opened up.²⁰ This led to Monroe’s eventual appointment, which he accepted in 1794. In 1797, he became governor of Virginia and began to air his views on national security. Originally much in favor of militias and somewhat tepid about standing armies,²¹ Monroe tried to gain more funding for the state’s defenses.²² This view would change in the next

¹⁴ Gary Hart, *James Monroe* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2005), 11.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 11-12.

¹⁶ Harry Ammon, *James Monroe: The Quest for National Identity* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1971), 7.

¹⁷ Hart, *James Monroe*, 6.

¹⁸ Monroe would rise to the rank of colonel in his early twenties, but would serve in a reserve role.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 19.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 29-30.

few years though. After being the successful diplomat to secure Louisiana from France in 1803, he was also sent to London to end the impressments of American sailors on British ships.²³ This was unsuccessful, but again, the old warhorse was to return. Becoming Secretary of State under Madison, Monroe would see first-hand that having a larger and more permanent military was prudent. When the War of 1812 broke out, after the impressment crisis had come to a head, but with mainly a citizen army to draw upon, the results ended with near disaster. Eventually being thrown into both positions of Secretary of State and War, Monroe wished to have a volunteer army to fight the British, but this was constantly denied by Congress.²⁴ In 1814, the lack of a large army or navy to beat back the British ended with Washington D.C. being captured. Although despite not being an active military commander, Monroe organized what had been a chaotic defense, conducting himself with professionalism and calm.²⁵ The devastation of Washington and other parts of the nation would leave a lasting legacy on his psyche.

Having served as an accomplished officer in the Continental Army and in various political offices that required concern to national security and foreign affairs, James Monroe perhaps found himself the most qualified president in those fields combined when he was inaugurated in 1817. Assuming the office, the fifth President immediately set himself to the national defenses. Still reliving the scars of the War of 1812, Monroe called upon his countrymen to rally and not allow what happened to the nation's capital to ever happen again.

Experiencing the fortune of other nations, the United States may be again involved in war, and it may, in that event be the object of the adverse party to upset our Government, to break our Union and demolish us as a Nation. Our distance from Europe, and the just, moderate, and pacific policy of our Government, may form some security against those dangers, but they ought to be anticipated and guarded against... We must support our rights or lose our character, and with it perhaps our liberties. A people who fail to do it can scarcely be said to hold a place among independent nations.²⁶

With this as a policy to strive towards, Monroe began to lobby extensively for coastal fortifications and

²¹ The Republicans were in favor of militias and diffuse government, not unlike the Classical traditions of ancient Greece and Rome.

²² Ammon, *The Quest for National Identity*, 177.

²³ Hart, *James Monroe*, 40-43.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 64.

²⁵ Ammon, *The Quest for National Identity*, 333.

²⁶ Hart, *James Monroe*, 69.

increasing the size of the national army.²⁷ While largely unsuccessful in his efforts, due in large part to budget cuts in the War Department beginning in 1821 (a bad depression was the main cause of the cuts), Monroe kept up his fervor, always advocating increased awareness to national security and the state of the military.²⁸ He realized, especially after the previous war with Britain, that nice words and diplomacy were not adequate to defend the national interest. With European intrigue all around the United States, from Russia in the west, Britain to the north and Spain to the south, there were plenty of issues at hand for the United States. From this, the stage was set for a man who was ready to declare to the world that the United States was not willing to have European encroachment in Western Hemisphere. A firm stand was needed and deemed the only way to ensure the defense of the country, which Monroe was always thinking about with paramount importance. He was not alone in this thinking amongst his countrymen.

John Quincy Adams, Secretary of State under President Monroe, is of near equal or equal importance to the president and the doctrine named after him. The sixth president of the United States is perhaps better known for his diplomatic successes (including his part concerning the Monroe Doctrine) before his presidency, and his anti-slavery stance afterwards. Born in 1767, he had quite a reputation to live up to in his formative years because of his father, John Adams.²⁹ A devoutly reverent Christian, his religious views would guide him throughout his life, which were instilled into him particularly by his mother.³⁰ An excerpt from his diary the year the Monroe Doctrine was declared, Adams gives praise to Christ, “All-gracious Parent! On my bended knee This dawning day I consecrate to Thee... Still grant me Lord, possession of my soul...”³¹ It would soon become part of his diplomatic and patriotic code.

As Britain and France marched to war against each other in the mid-1790s, Adams had already identified as a Federalist.³² His brilliant oratory skills brought him high acclaim from the likes of Treasury

²⁷ Ibid, 69-70.

²⁸ Ibid, 78-79.

²⁹ Robert V. Remini, *John Quincy Adams* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2002), 2.

³⁰ Ibid, 3-4.

³¹ John Quincy Adams, *The Diary of John Quincy Adams: 1794-1845*. ed. Allan Nevins. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 294.

³² Remini, *John Quincy Adams*, 22-23. The Federalists were in favor of central banking and government, while being more interested with commercial and big business interests.

Secretary Alexander Hamilton and President George Washington (and no doubt his father, the current Vice President), which helped earn the position of minister to the Netherlands.³³ He would later be moved to Portugal and moved again to the diplomatic post in Prussia over the next few years. In 1802, Adams having returned home, became a Senator from his home state of Massachusetts, whose body was both powerful and involved far more in foreign affairs.³⁴ All of these experiences would guide his future career and give him the experience to become the major player he would become regarding the Monroe Doctrine. After some affiliations with the Republican party (which would prove fortuitous in the future), Adams was confirmed as the minister to Russia in 1809, gaining bipartisan support and disapproval.³⁵ This would prove vital, as the Russians would figure prominently during 1823.

Minister Adam's relations with Tsar Alexander I were most amicable, including Adams protecting U.S. interests in Russian and other foreign ports, along with deep conversations pertaining to the United States a land that had fascinated the Tsar.³⁶ Alexander was so impressed by the United States and her ideals, he believed the liberal notions supported by the U.S. were for the betterment of the world.³⁷ When France invaded Russia in 1812, and the U.S. was at war with England (now Russia's ally), Adams still was so apt in his negotiations and had such positive relations with the Tsar, Alexander was even willing to mediate the conflict between the U.S. and England.³⁸ As the wars in both Europe and the United States were drawing to an end, Adams wished to bring peace to his country with the hope that God would guide him and his country to that peace. "On the providence of God alone is my reliance... The welfare of my family and country, with the interests of humanity, are staked upon the event. To Heaven alone it must be committed."³⁹ Peace soon became a reality in part due to his negotiations at the Treaty of Ghent,⁴⁰ which did not improve his feelings towards the English (and would be on display towards them

³³ Ibid, 22-24.

³⁴ Ibid, 35.

³⁵ Ibid, 39-41.

³⁶ Ibid, 41-42.

³⁷ John Quincy Adams, *Diary*, 65.

³⁸ Remini, *John Quincy Adams*, 42-43.

³⁹ John Quincy Adams, *Diary*, 119.

⁴⁰ The treaty ended the War of 1812 in December 1814.

when the Monroe Doctrine was written.⁴¹ After these and many other successes, Adams was asked to join the new Monroe administration in 1817, as Secretary of State.⁴² This would be one of the most interesting and incredible pairings in American history.

While Adams had a distinguished career as a diplomat abroad, his greatest service to his country in overseas affairs would occur while at home. In 1819, he accomplished a great feat by negotiation with Spain, gaining the territory of Florida and establishing boundaries between the Louisiana Purchase and still Spain controlled Mexico (part of today's American Southwest).⁴³ One of his primary interests had been to protect American settlements in the South from Indian raids, while the Spanish had been unable (or unwilling?) to get a handle on the situation. He even went so far as to support General Andrew Jackson's aggressive incursion into Florida before the Transcontinental Treaty was signed in 1819 and ratified by the Spanish in 1821. Before this treaty had been set in stone, Adams was always in support of republican government, but he was the one who advised Monroe against recognizing the new Latin American governments to prevent incurring the wrath of Europe and the Holy Alliance, especially with the treaty still in limbo. Eventually, before the Monroe Doctrine was declared, the U.S. recognized the new Latin American republics, but this was not the end for Adams or his country's interest in the region. This interest though was to be frowned upon by the monarchial forces of Europe, evidenced by their stances and actions during the early nineteenth century.

Metternich, the Holy Alliance and Europe

The nineteenth century, at least in terms of military and economic power, was a European one. The United States was much weaker at this point in history and was constantly worried about actions not only about her own security, but actions taken on the other side of the Atlantic too, particularly against republican and liberal movements.⁴⁴ Despite the ravages of the Napoleonic Wars on the Continent, Europe's national powers were still very much master of not only their own domains, but were looking

⁴¹ Dexter Perkins, *Castlereagh and Adams* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), 40-42, 130.

⁴² Remini, *John Quincy Adams*, 48-49.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 54-56.

⁴⁴ Perkins, *Hands Off*, 24.

outwards as well. The post-Napoleonic landscape of Europe can be divided into the theoretical and the more tangible: the Age of Metternich and the Holy Alliance respectively. First addressing Metternich, the man was noble from birth and entrenched in the aristocracy.⁴⁵ While more pragmatic than ultra conservative, Metternich was still very much a man of order and against potentially upsetting ideologies, such as liberalism.⁴⁶ His contempt for these forms of governance was great and mirrored reactions of many old regimes towards the republic. “While very much concerned with the state of the Habsburg Empire, he also was interested in seeing the monarchies of Europe destroy or smother the forces of disorder within the Continent. To do this, Metternich wished to use the Holy Alliance (which will be addressed shortly) to be the instrument of order and rationalism.”⁴⁷ His force of will and opinion was so strong, Metternich even swayed Tsar Alexander I of Russia to divest himself of liberal leanings.⁴⁸ This is what reigned in Europe from 1815-1848; the Age of Metternich.⁴⁹

Not only was Metternich concerned with forces of liberalism and other anti-monarchical ideology, but much of Europe was as well. The device that brought together these European forces however, was originally not intended to suppress the people, but was soon used to do just that. Coming out of the final push to destroy Napoleon, the Congress of Vienna was designed not only create the alliance to finally finish off the French dictator, but also to reestablish the right of monarchs to rule.⁵⁰ From this, came the Holy Alliance, which was first proposed by Tsar Alexander I of Russia and came into being with Austria, Prussia and Russia signing on. At first, the Alliance was for the nations of Europe to deal with each other based on Christian principles (which was non-denominational, as Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants engaged in the endeavor), even bringing in the common peoples’ concerns as part of the arrangement.⁵⁶ However, Metternich stepped in, and changed the Alliance into an agreement between rulers, avoiding the rights of the people and binding reforms such as constitutions. After France’s entry into the “Concert of

⁴⁵ Delfiner, “Alexander I...,” 144.

⁴⁶ Robin Okey, *Eastern Europe 1740-1985: Feudalism to Communism* 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 62.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 62-63.

⁴⁸ Delfiner, “Alexander I...,” 145.

⁴⁹ Robert Gildea, *Barricades and Borders: 1800-1914* 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 59.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 60.

Europe” (not exactly the Holy Alliance, but still brought her into the orbit of the Continental Alliance members) in 1818, the Alliance began to move in ruthlessly against the forces of dissent and those against monarchy.⁵¹ These post-Napoleonic stirrings were of great concern to the Alliance and to Metternich. “Agitation after 1815 by Spanish liberals, German students, Italian carbonari and Greek patriots convinced him that Europe, ‘visited by a plague,’ was ‘an object of pity to a man’s intellect, of horror to a man’s virtue.’”⁵² Soon, the plague and objects of pity and horror were to be confronted directly, with the concerned United States watching from afar.

By 1819, the forces of change and reform were under attack from the European powers. One could only imagine what the United States, thousands of miles away, would think of such backward and heavy-handed tactics which were to be employed against liberal forces. The Karlsbad Decrees⁵³ of 1819 were brought about, giving the state more secret police powers within Austrian held Germany.⁵⁴ The Papal States were turning back the clock, reinstating dominance by the Catholic Church, restricting freedoms and bringing back harsher law and justice.⁵⁵ The forces of reaction affected the U.S. more directly when an invasion fleet from Cadiz was prepared to leave Spain and restore rule over the former Latin American colonies. Fortunately from the American and Latin American perspectives, a mutiny occurred and the invasion was called off. In 1821, the full weight of the hammer began its descent. The Austrians, squashed the rebellions of pro-liberal forces in Naples and Piedmont.⁵⁶ Things became even more unhinged, when Spain was invaded by the French in 1823, at the prodding of the Holy Alliance, due to the overthrow of King Ferdinand VII. However, in one instance, the pendulum turned the other way. Instead of aiding the rebels in Greece, who were Christians fighting against Muslim Turks, the Europeans and particularly the Russians were keeping a hands off approach to the revolution in the early 1820s.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Ibid, 61.

⁵² Delfiner, “*Alexander I...*,” 62.

⁵³ Police powers were expanded and the universities, which enunciated liberal and anti-monarchial sentiment, had harsh restrictions put upon the students and professors.

⁵⁴ Michael Broers, *Europe after Napoleon: Revolution, reaction and romanticism 1814-1848* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 123.

⁵⁵ Gildea, *Barricades and Borders*, 66.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 67.

⁵⁷ May, *The Making*, 8-9.

This greatly troubled President Monroe, who greatly admired the history of the Greeks. The liberal United States was unnerved by the events occurring across the Atlantic and could only be discouraged by the calamities occurring in Europe against those in favor of democracy and freedom.

Also of some notice to the United States was Russia. The very first line in the Monroe Doctrine dealt directly with the Russian Empire, and her interest in what is now the Pacific Northwest of the United States.⁵⁸ This went against the initially good relations with Russia and her leader, Tsar Alexander I and the American government. Thomas Jefferson became aware of Alexander's liberal leanings while Jefferson was representing the U.S. in France.⁵⁹ By the end of Jefferson's presidency, full diplomatic relations were created, including cordial correspondence between the two chieftains. John Quincy Adams, the first envoy from the United States to Russia, was received in 1809 in a very positive manner from the tsar himself.⁶⁰ This extended into the War of 1812, when Russia offered to mediate between America and Britain, showing an obvious American bias.⁶¹ Things continued to go well till the early 1820s, Anglophobia a uniting force. However, both Alexander and U.S.-Russian relations soured. The tsar, under the influence of Metternich, went against his prior liberalism, instead upholding monarchy.⁶² This was proven by Russian support for the overthrow of liberals in Piedmont and other liberal reformers.⁶³

Obviously, this was not welcomed news for the Americans, who were now disillusioned with the once popular tsar. Former President Madison diplomatically wrote in 1821 he had "seen, not without some little disappointment, the latter developments of character in the Emperor Alexander."⁶⁴ These ill turns extended to diplomacy between the two countries, evidenced by disputes regarding what is now British Columbia. In 1821, the Russian-American Company, interested in things such as otter pelts,

⁵⁸ Appendix A: "Transcript of Monroe Doctrine."

⁵⁹ Nakajima, "The Monroe Doctrine and Russia," 443.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 444.

⁶¹ Ibid, 445-446.

⁶² Delfiner, "Alexander I...," 142.

⁶³ Russia and Prussia had supported Austrian counter-revolutionary operation, as previously mentioned concerning Piedmont and Naples.

⁶⁴ Nakajima, "The Monroe Doctrine and Russia," 439.

wished to exclude British and American trade in the region.⁶⁵ On September 16th, 1821, Alexander declared a “ukaz,” claiming all territory down to the 51st parallel as Russian. This severely dampened U.S.-Russian relations, so much so, that British Foreign Secretary George Canning said the “‘apparently extravagant [Monroe] doctrine’ was ‘principally, if not specifically, directed against the no less extravagant doctrine of the Russian Ukase of 1821.’”⁶⁶ However, it was more than the intrigue of Russia, the Holy Alliance or the rest of Europe; Latin America also loomed large, as they were at the heart of this intrigue from Europe, putting the Americans on alert.

Latin America

In regards to Latin America, the United States certainly had interests in the region, but the main concern was that the Europeans were hoping to reclaim what had been lost during the early nineteenth century revolutions. With the non-colonization (or no re-colonization) principle in the Monroe Doctrine, President Monroe put his nation on the world stage, due to his support of the newly formed Latin republics and wish for Europeans to stay out of their affairs.⁶⁷ However, to say that the United States had absolutely no interest beyond national security and sending well wishes to the newly formed nations is not entirely accurate either. Trade was beginning to flourish in the area and common interest of being republics were things the U.S. could not ignore. This is supported by the constant Congressional hankering for the “patriots of the south,” led by Representative Henry Clay.⁶⁸ The history of this has been misconstrued as American imperialism from the onset, but a record relating to defense of national interest and idealism is apparent.

Not long after the founding of the United States and her Constitution, commerce with the world was of great importance. In 1797, the Spanish created a royal order, declaring ports in their colonies abroad open to neutral shipping as they battled England.⁶⁹ This directly and mostly benefited the United

⁶⁵ Ibid, 446-447.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 447.

⁶⁷ Michael J. Kryzanek, *U.S.-Latin American Relations*, 7.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 6.

⁶⁹ Arthur Preston Whitaker, *The United States and the Independence of Latin America 1800-1830* (New York: Russell & Russell Inc., 1962), 4.

States, the greatest of the neutral maritime navies.⁷⁰ From 1796 to 1806, American total exports went up from three percent to twelve percent to Spanish America as a result of this policy.⁷¹ This policy of freer trade was obviously well received, but as the Napoleonic Wars raged in Europe, peace would eventually come. It was feared that once peace came, this freer trade would fall back to the Spanish monopoly amongst her colonies. The United States also wished to push back all commercial and political intrigue from Europe in the newly established Latin republics, being a national priority since the end of the Jefferson administration.⁷² It was also preferable to give the new republics recognition, so that other nations would have to recognize them too, coupled with the fact that U.S. vessels of commerce would be protected from piracy and other high seas interference.⁷³ Some private American concerns were wishing to stir the pot in favor of revolution, including John Jacob Astor's vessel *Beaver*, which was intended to supply arms to rebelling Latin Americans.⁷⁴ However, other concerns were in play with recognition, flying in the face of it.

Problems were emanating from East Florida (which is Florida today) for the United States. Indians were constantly raiding the southern U.S. and fleeing back across the Floridian border to escape American reprisals.⁷⁵ The Spanish were either unable (or potentially unwilling?) to deal with this issue. General Jackson moved throughout the region to pacify the raiders, even occupying Spanish garrison at Pensacola.⁷⁶ Already upsetting the Spanish and hoping to gain East Florida, the United States did not want to anger Spain by going out on a limb for the newly minted Latin American republics.⁷⁷ This was finally done on February 22, 1819, with the signing of the Transcontinental Treaty, ceding Florida and all Spanish territory north of the forty-second parallel to the Pacific Ocean.⁷⁸ However, the treaty was not formally recognized till 1821 by the Spanish, delaying any diplomatic movement. With this thorny issue

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 5.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 38.

⁷² *Ibid*, 415.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 275.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 283-284.

⁷⁵ Ammon, *The Quest for National Identity*, 414.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 421.

⁷⁷ Hart, *James Monroe*, 98.

⁷⁸ Whitaker, *Independence of Latin America*, 267.

resolved, the U.S. moved positively towards Latin America.

While sympathetic to the plight of the republics, the United States could not make a provocative move against Spain going back to the early days of Latin American rebellion in 1810. From that moment on, emissaries were sent to Washington, begging for assistance and more importantly recognition.⁷⁹ With war all around and lack of strength, the U.S. was hardly in a position to take proactive stance, even as time progressed. This did not mean American sympathies did not flow south, but until the problem with East Florida was resolved, no action could be taken. After 1821, the Congress began to consider recognizing the new governments to the south.⁸⁰ Despite Spanish indignation at this turn in American foreign policy, this did not dissuade the latter.⁸¹ Finally, now that angering Spain was no longer a concern, recognition came in 1822, at the behest of President Monroe who went to the Congress requesting appropriations for ministers.⁸² To move further though, the U.S. was in no position to do so, but the region would still concern the republic mightily in the coming months and years.

The U.S. (and British)

Having looked at the international scene, it is clear the Monroe Doctrine did not just appear out of thin air. The necessity for the Doctrine began fomenting from the time immediately after the Revolution. There were numerous issues facing the new American nation with Great Britain: prewar debts, other economic and trade issues, but perhaps most importantly, impressment of American sailors.⁸³ When war broke out between Britain and France in 1793, the stakes were raised when the British began to become far more aggressive with neutral American shipping, resulting in the capture of those vessels heading to France and her overseas holdings.⁸⁴ This was made worse when the British captured approximately 300 ships before news of this new policy was announced publically.⁸⁵ Despite different solutions to this

⁷⁹ William Spence Robertson, "The United States and Spain in 1822," *The American Historical Review* 20 no. 4 (July 1915), 781.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 782.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 786-787.

⁸² Perkins, *Hands Off*, 25-26.

⁸³ Todd Estes, "John Jay, the Concept of Deference, and the Transformation of Early American Political Culture." *Historian* 65 no. 2 (Winter 2002), 293.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 298-299.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 299.

daunting problem, including cutting off trade with Great Britain (proposed by the Republicans), John Jay was sent in 1794 to Britain to broker a deal. When the Jay Treaty was finally consummated by both sides in November, the U.S. gained British withdrawals from their garrisons in U.S. territory, commissions to settle border disputes with Canada and American ships seized by the Royal Navy, limited trade with the British West Indies and an avoidance of war.⁸⁶ Once it was announced, there was backlash from the Americans at home, though Jay stated “we [Americans] have reason to be satisfied.” This was not the case of all Americans though, including James Monroe, then minister to France, asking for the full treaty so that he and the concerned French could review it.⁸⁷ This concern was not out of bounds, as issues such as impressment were not addressed, and eventually there would be conflict over American individual and commercial rights.

On land, things were not well either. With the rise of Napoleon, French overreach around the world was not out of the question. In part due to worry about French control of Louisiana, especially the vital port of New Orleans, where a large portion of U.S. commerce went through, the Jefferson administration (with Monroe as emissary) decided to make the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.⁸⁸ It was so concerning to the American government, that Jefferson considered sending Monroe to consummate a defensive treaty with England over French intrigue in Louisiana. Fortunately from the American perspective, this was unnecessary with the Purchase, therefore not forcing the U.S. even more into Great Britain’s orbit. As the Napoleonic Wars began to ratchet up, Jefferson went even further by placing an embargo on all foreign trade in 1807, in order to avoid involvement in the war and based on the principle of isolationism.⁸⁹ This eventually was ended in 1809, no doubt due to Federalist opposition (mercantile and trade interests),⁹⁰ but this policy also staked out American unwillingness to be pulled in by potential European suitors. Matters soon became more complicated again; this time, impressment of American

⁸⁶ Ibid, 300-301.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 303.

⁸⁸ Maldwyn A. Jones, *Limits of Liberty: American History 1607-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 94.

⁸⁹ Perkins, *Hands Off*, 21.

⁹⁰ Sexton, *Empire and Nation*, 29-30.

sailors was rearing its ugly head once more. The Royal Navy's need for sailors had not ceased as the Napoleonic Wars were dragging on. It became so obnoxious, that a British frigate even brought an American warship to heel, searching for "deserters" (some of whom were Americans escaping British impressment ironically).⁹¹ Being pressed to the hilt concerning these and other issues with the British, America had finally had enough.

On June 1st, 1812, President Madison delivered a message of war to Congress.⁹² He and the much of the country had grown weary of the impressments and the president made an impassioned call to action. "[American sailors] have been dragged on board ships of war of a foreign nation; and exposed, under the severities of their discipline, to be exiled to the most distant and deadly climes, to risk their lives in the battles of their oppressors..." With the British tied up in its war with Napoleonic France, the war was fought to a basic standstill by the end of 1814.⁹³ The American position was somewhat enhanced by the battle for New Orleans in 1815,⁹⁴ but the war revealed a woeful American military and overall defensive system.⁹⁵ It is no small wonder why Monroe, then Secretary of War and State, was so concerned about defense of the nation, after seeing the White House burn, Washington D.C. occupied and an inability to stop the British fleet. Even as the war came to an end and neutrality began to reign again, American feelings of European outside influence had not changed, but a new wrinkle would challenge this sentiment.

After the Treaty of Ghent was signed, relations began to thaw a bit between Great Britain and the United States. Impressments of sailors ended not long after the War of 1812 concluded.⁹⁶ While there was no feeling of camaraderie amongst the two former enemies relations were beginning to find similar tracts.

⁹¹ George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776* (Cary: Oxford University Press USA, 2008), 118.

⁹² Paul A. Gilje, "Free Trade and Sailors' Rights: The Rhetoric of the War of 1812." *Journal of the Early Republic* 30, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 12.

⁹³ Charles Esdaile, *Napoleon's Wars: An International History* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2007), 485.

⁹⁴ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812: Part Two* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1882). In this classic work, the account of how General Andrew Jackson (later the seventh President) led the heroic defense of New Orleans against crack troops, when the odds were against the Americans.

⁹⁵ Esdaile, *Napoleon's Wars*, 484.

⁹⁶ Keith Mercer, "Northern Exposure: Resistance to Naval Impressment in British North America. 1775-1815" *Canadian Historical Review* 91, no. 2 (Jun. 2012): 231.

The United States was not the only nation interested in Latin American trade; Great Britain was just if not more desirous for potential commercial relationship with the new republics. A country based largely on trade, this makes perfect sense; a new market(s) had to be exploited, not only to benefit their own country, and Britain could ill afford to lose out to her European competitors. Of less importance, Britain was far less willing than the European Continental Powers to overthrow liberal uprisings in order to keep establishment monarchies on their thrones.⁹⁷ Seeing the situation growing more and more unstable, including the French restoration foray into Spain in 1823, Britain had reasons to be worried. Should the former colonies in Latin America be restored to Spanish (or other European) rule, trade in this region could be dampened and potentially ended.⁹⁸ This is where the Foreign Secretary for Great Britain, George Canning, became a very, if not the most pivotal catalyst for movement from the Monroe administration towards the Monroe Doctrine.

Meeting with the American minister to Britain, Richard Rush, in London in August 1823, Canning made his great proposal.⁹⁹ Canning proposed to Rush that the Latin American republics should be allowed to maintain independence and that U.S. and Britain should in essence become allies to keep European predations away from the former colonies.¹⁰⁰ Rush was stunned, due in large part to their countries' past hostility towards each other. Later that month, Canning delivered his destiny filled letter to Rush, which came to Monroe about six weeks later.¹⁰¹ In the letter, Canning outlines British intentions related to the new republics with five major points:

1. We conceive the recovery of the Colonies by Spain to be hopeless.
2. We conceive the question of the recognition of them as Independent States, to be one of time and circumstances.
3. We are however, by no means disposed to throw any impediment in the way of an arrangement between them and the mother country by amicable negotiations.
4. We aim not at the possession of any portion of them ourselves.
5. We could not see any portion of them transferred to any other Power, with indifference.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Perkins, *Hands Off*, 35.

⁹⁸ Edith Phelps, *Selected Articles on the Monroe Doctrine* (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1915), 8.

⁹⁹ May, *The Making*, 1.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 2-3.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 5.

¹⁰² Appendix B: George Canning's Letter Richard Rush.

Canning then wondered if Rush could get a similar declaration out of the American government, and better yet, could Rush get his government to make a co-declaration with Canning's?¹⁰³ From this, the wheels would be set in motion for the discussion within the Monroe administration; what to do with this potentially fortuitous offer?

Back in Washington, Monroe was not only considering the letter from Canning, but all that had and was currently going on in international affairs. As previously outlined in the earlier sections (i.e., Europe/Russia and Latin America), the world was not a seemingly pleasant place. Europe was overall a reactionary and absolutist place, putting down liberalism anywhere it hoped to flourish. Latin America was freeing much of itself from the bonds with Europe, but there was concern Europe, particularly Spain and/or the Holy Alliance, would return to claim or reclaim what they felt was rightly theirs. Now with this letter from the British government, how were Monroe and his deputies supposed to respond? At first, many were extremely supportive of an arrangement with Britain. Even Monroe was fairly supportive at first, when he wrote to his mentor at Monticello, Thomas Jefferson, "My own impression is that we ought to meet the proposal of the British government."¹⁰⁴ Jefferson, the architect of the Declaration of Independence was grudgingly, yet conversely extremely supportive of the move. "Great Britain is the nation which can do us the most harm of any one... and with her on our side we need not fear the whole world."¹⁰⁵ He went further, saying that while he did not wish for Britain to draw the U.S. into her wars, this informal alliance would keep Europe out and allow for American ideals to flourish in the Western Hemisphere. While not as enthusiastic as Jefferson, Madison was fairly supportive too. The Monroe cabinet, including Secretary of War Calhoun, leaned heavily towards acceptance.¹⁰⁶ From the American perspective, why not support this great opportunity? It accomplished much of what the United States wanted: it provided diplomatic support to the revolutionary governments in Latin America, forcing the other European powers to stay out of the Hemisphere and put America in a far more powerful and

¹⁰³ May, *The Making*, 6.

¹⁰⁴ Perkins, *Hands Off*, 46.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 46.

¹⁰⁶ Sexton, *Empire and Nation*, 51.

respectable position on the world stage. Yet, not was all well in the Monroe cabinet, with one voice saying no.

While this proposal of linking British and American interests was quite promising, and would accomplish a great deal towards the United States' (and President Monroe's) wish for defense, it didn't sway Secretary of State John Quincy Adams. He was greatly concerned this would leave the U.S. in a very vulnerable position.

The wily British statesman [Foreign Secretary Canning] declined to extend recognition to the new states of Spanish America... portended a duplicitous reversal of British policy that would leave the United States standing alone against the Holy Alliance.¹⁰⁷

From this, the position of being defensive would go from being manageable, to an impossibly difficult task. At first, Adams was at least somewhat supportive of the joint venture, but ultimately worry of a potential double cross swayed him against Britain.¹⁰⁸ This is not to say that Adams was against the cause of Latin American countries fighting for their freedom against the Spanish and other European intrigues, but he also was against being too aggressive towards the Europeans also.¹⁰⁹ However, it should be remembered that he was also against recognition of the Latin American republics before it was made official in 1822. Even so, Adams was thinking very much of national interest, no matter what his personal opinions were concerning idealism or supporting fellow republics. Both sides were deadlocked; one represented by Adams and uncompromising national interest, the other representing more pragmatism and putting the U.S. in a seemingly better position to promote her idealism on an unprecedented scale.

On October 11, 1823, Monroe and his cabinet began to discuss the contents of Canning's letter.¹¹⁰ While both Calhoun and to a lesser extent Adams considered adopting some sort of accommodation with the British, American outrage with their former mother country was evident amongst much of the populace.¹¹¹ There had been a letter from the top U.S. diplomat in Spain who was witnessing the French incursion into the country, which outlined potential French and Russian interests in Latin America.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 52.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 51.

¹⁰⁹ Perkins, *Hands Off*, 25.

¹¹⁰ May, *The Making*, 190.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 192-193.

Baron Tyull, the Russian minister to the U.S., informed Adams that the Russian court would not receive any Latin American envoys from the recently freed nations. The conversation in the executive branch began to heat up in early November, with Monroe and Calhoun becoming very troubled that the Holy Alliance would restore Spain's colonies. Adams wrote on the thirteenth Monroe was alarmed with current events. "'Alarmed far beyond anything I could conceive possible' and 'the news that Cadiz [the last liberal stronghold in Spain] has surrendered to the French has so affected him that he appeared entirely to despair of the cause of South America.'"¹¹³ To add more fuel to the fire, there was grave concern that the French fleet was going to transport royal Spanish troops, under King Ferdinand VII, back to Latin America.¹¹⁴ It should be noted that at this time in history, not only was America not the dominant naval power in the world, but was woefully outgunned. Her fleet was a quarter of the French's fleet and one-eighth the size of Russia's.¹¹⁵ Even with privateers and being closer to Latin America, "a combined French and Russian intervention in American affairs would have constituted a considerable menace."¹¹⁶ With this and the concern of British machinations, the Monroe cabinet had to respond in some meaningful way.

The debate in the Monroe cabinet continued to grow more divided. While all agreed, even Adams, that joining the British did have some advantages, Adams was wondering if pushing back the European powers with a British alliance was even needed. Would the potential Holy Alliance be able to enforce its will on the new republics, bringing them back into the fold, even for a time?¹¹⁷ Even if the alliance with Britain was necessary, could there be another solution without the British? Adams began to enforce his will in cabinet meetings, especially since it was his department that was charged with talking to the British, the Russians and other concerned parties. Until the British recognized the Latin American republics, Adams was not willing to move, no matter how enticing the deal appeared to be.¹¹⁸ Somehow,

¹¹² Perkins, *Hands Off*, 40.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, 41.

¹¹⁴ May, *The Making*, 201.

¹¹⁵ Perkins, *Hands Off*, 59.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 59.

¹¹⁷ May, *The Making*, 203.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 206-207.

Adams allayed Monroe's fears, as the former was far less concerned about any invasion or direct European intervention, but the latter believed there was a serious threat regardless of other cabinet opinions.¹¹⁹ From an entry in Adams diary in early November, one can see the his desire for an American declaration to set forth American principles; “‘It would be more candid, as well as more dignified,’ Adams concluded, ‘to avow our principles explicitly... than to come in as a cock-boat in the wake of the British man-of-war.’”¹²⁰ Eventually, Adams was able to use his diplomatic skill and logic to overcome Monroe's, Jefferson's and the other pro-British alliance contributors to create a new American policy.¹²¹ Now, America would move alone to declare the Western Hemisphere off limits and state the American case for this defense.

Monroe was only days away from making his doctrine known, along with the other issues which would be mentioned in his message to Congress. He collected all relevant information from each cabinet position, including Adam's State Department: this included addressing the Latin American republics U.S. recognition, no mention of any British alliance or joint declaration and a new theme, “a declaration that there should be no future European colonization in the Western Hemisphere.”¹²² There was also mention of the Russian move into North America, denouncing the French and Holy Alliance crushing of liberal Spain and recommending Congress allow for a minister to the rebels in Greece.¹²³ Of these three, all but the first was immediately rejected by Adams, believing this would hurt relations with several of the European powers. Monroe, while not willing to go back on what he said, the President was also flexible and quite possibly impressed with Adams passionate counter proposals.¹²⁴ Adams was concerned the unedited paragraphs could create an atmosphere of war brewing and that peace should be maintained if at all possible. Instead of making bold proclamations about European policies, Adams wanted a softer approach, telling Europe to stay out of the Americas and the Americans should stay out of European

¹¹⁹ Perkins, *Hands Off*, 59.

¹²⁰ Sexton, *Empire and Nation*, 52.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 53.

¹²² May, *The Making*, 211.

¹²³ *Ibid*, 214.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 216.

affairs.¹²⁵ The debate continued though, with Adams and Calhoun fighting over their respective positions almost till the deciding day of December 2nd.¹²⁶ Now having the gift of foresight, Adams won the argument in large part, with the Monroe Doctrine making far less egregious remarks, mentioning non-colonization, no interference with the new republics, etc.¹²⁷ Although the Doctrine is only about one sixth of the total address to Congress¹²⁸, it was an excellent way to glean from the American government and her people a discernable trait: idealism.

In the document itself though, while defensive, one cannot miss the idealism of it and the country that put the Monroe Doctrine forth. Secretary of State Adams wrote after the French intervention in Spain, whose idealism was instrumental in the forging of the Monroe Doctrine itself, gives credit to the spirit in which the message was written.

The influence our example has unsettled all the ancient governments of Europe... It will overthrow them all without exception. I hold this revolution to be as infallible as that the earth will perform a revolution around the sun in a year.¹²⁹

This idealism also was also apparent from President Monroe himself. While Adams preferred this declaration to be sent through diplomatic dispatches to the European powers, Monroe wished to have this message put through in Congress and allow the whole world to hear it.¹³⁰ Rather than quietly proclaim the principles of non-colonization and non-interference to the foreign ministers of Europe, Monroe wished to tell the world the American way was better and the old regimes were on the wrong side of history. He also had believed that United States was the example of the world, having allowed the revolutions of Europe and South America to occur because of the American template¹³¹, so why not use this as a doctrine to promote American principles all around the world? The response from around the world was mixed, but mostly negative to these ideals and principles though.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 218.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 221-222.

¹²⁷ Appendix A: "Transcript of Monroe Doctrine."

¹²⁸ Sexton, *Nation and Empire*, 47-48.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 55.

¹³⁰ Hart, *James Monroe*, 102.

¹³¹ May, *The Making*, 17.

International Reaction

In Latin America, which the Monroe Doctrine primarily addressed, responses varied. In the more conservative circles, the feelings amongst these people were “decidedly cool.”¹³² Many of them were hoping and relying on the fact the British and the Royal Navy would protect them from any Continental European incursions. Some of those in Latin America were concerned about territorial ambitions, including the venerable Bolivar of Colombia and elites of Buenos Aires.¹³³ However, it must be noted that most of this opposition was conservative in nature, not likely to support liberal policies the United States was often in favor of. In liberal Latin American circles, the response was much more favorable. The Brazilian and Colombian governments heartily endorsed the Doctrine.¹³⁴ It even inspired the country of Chile to consider an alliance with the United States, though this was not practical or possible from the American perspective. Europe would be far less pleased with this forward and idealistic document though.

The British were perhaps the most affected by the Monroe Doctrine’s proclamation. While Canning had clung to a potential concord with the Americans, his hopes were in essence dashed by the Doctrine and the British position was now less assured in Latin America.¹³⁵ It took some brilliant political maneuvering on his part to put the Holy Alliance at ease about British interests in Latin America, as well as domestic critics of the British government. Metternich was far more perturbed by the seemingly petulant United States.

These United States of America which we have seen arise and grow... have suddenly left a sphere too narrow for their ambition, and have astonished Europe a new act of revolt, more unprovoked, fully as audacious, and no less dangerous than the former. They have distinctly and clearly announced their intention to set not only power against power, but, to express it more exactly, altar against altar. In their indecent declarations they have cast blame and scorn on the institutions of Europe most worthy of respect...¹³⁶

Madrid, Berlin and Vienna expressed silence, which was also followed by Tsar Alexander I of Russia. He

¹³² Whitaker, *Independence of Latin America*, 535.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 536.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 538.

¹³⁵ May, *The Making*, 240-243.

¹³⁶ Perkins, *Hands Off*, 56.

did express to his foreign minister in the United States, “the document in question enunciates views and pretensions so exaggerated, it establishes principles so contrary to the rights of the European powers... continue to maintain the silence...”¹³⁷ The French were indignant about the non-colonization clause. However, there was some support from Marquis de Lafayette (of American Revolutionary War fame), who called it, “the best little piece of paper that God had ever permitted any man to give to the World.” Unfortunately, from the American position, these compliments and congratulations were few and far between from Europe.¹³⁸ Rather than submitting to the British or cowering to the European powers, the United States had staked out her territory and at the same time, defended liberal principles despite being outnumbered and reviled in the international arena.

Conclusion

Even with all of this evidence, the Monroe Doctrine is still a lightning rod for debate about whether it was imperialistic or defensive. However, the argument for imperialism from the United States at this point in history is irrelevant. The United States was anything but an imperial power at this stage. The Monroe Doctrine reflects this earlier nation; it obviously is, at least in its original form anything but imperialistic. The Doctrine did not have mischievous intent lurking in the spaces of the written words. Rather, it was a statement of principle and potentially a beacon of hope for the Americas and all those who were interested in liberalism and a republican form of government. As noted earlier in this work, there should be no question as to why and how this document came into being. The world was a far scarier place for the United States in terms of balance of power in 1823. As previously shown, everything the American government was doing, was on the defensive. Europe was in the midst of reclaiming the rights of monarchs. Latin America, while lifting the bonds of rule from Spain, was in a tenuous position. Would the Holy Alliance’s return to take back what they felt should be their right by God? No one could rightly tell without guessing, though Adams did prove to be a great fortune teller. Instead of imperial prestige, the U.S. was far more interested in mere defense at this point in her history than with any other

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 57.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, 58.

matter. Her actual defenses were relatively weak, as the War of 1812 and the comparison of military might with other powers has shown. The Monroe cabinet, still smarting from apparent weakness and worry over what the European powers would do in the Western Hemisphere, were very worried over about keeping the United States at arm's length from the old regimes. Monroe the soldier and Adams the diplomat, were men of principle, who wished to see America as a country that would rise above the perceived world of tyrannical monarchy.

The letter from Canning was the final primer that pushed the Monroe Doctrine. After decades of worrying about the Europeans and years of wondering if Latin America would free itself or not, Monroe and Adams knew they had to respond. From this, the Monroe Doctrine was conceived and brought forth to the world as speaking out against the potential and real trespasses of the European powers. From Russia in the Pacific Northwest, to the Spanish and French intrigue concerning the Latin American republics, to the British desire for commerce and potential domination of them, the United States shone a light on these plans. Finally, it gave an idealistic message that was saying to the world that their way was best; it was time to move on from the old plays for power and that republican and liberal ideas were the wave of the future, and Europe should not interfere in the process, either with Latin America or the U.S. While maybe not the divinely inspired creation that Lafayette thought it was, the Monroe Doctrine is one of defense in practicality and one defense in theory; a defense of American interests and a defense of the idea that American values were a better way forward for a world perceived to be heading in the wrong direction.

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Appendix A

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Transcript of Monroe Doctrine (1823)

Note: The Monroe Doctrine was expressed during President Monroe's seventh annual message to Congress, December 2, 1823:

. . . At the proposal of the Russian Imperial Government, made through the minister of the Emperor residing here, a full power and instructions have been transmitted to the minister of the United States at St. Petersburg to arrange by amicable negotiation the respective rights and interests of the two nations on the northwest coast of this continent. A similar proposal has been made by His Imperial Majesty to the Government of Great Britain, which has likewise been acceded to. The Government of the United States has been desirous by this friendly proceeding of manifesting the great value which they have invariably attached to the friendship of the Emperor and their solicitude to cultivate the best understanding with his Government. In the discussions to which this interest has given rise and in the arrangements by which they may terminate the occasion has been judged proper for asserting, as a principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that 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. . .

It was stated at the commencement of the last session that a great effort was then making in Spain and Portugal to improve the condition of the people of those countries, and that it appeared to be conducted with extraordinary moderation. It need scarcely be remarked that the results have been so far very different from what was then anticipated. Of events in that quarter of the globe, with which we have so much intercourse and from which we derive our origin, we have always been anxious and interested spectators. The citizens of the United States cherish sentiments the most friendly in favor of the liberty and happiness of their fellow-men on that side of the Atlantic. In the wars of the European powers in matters relating to themselves we have never taken any part, nor does it comport with our policy to do so. It is only when our rights are invaded or seriously menaced that we resent injuries or make preparation for our defense. With the movements in this hemisphere we are of necessity more immediately connected, and by causes which must be obvious to all enlightened and impartial observers. The political system of the allied powers is essentially different in this respect from that of America. This difference proceeds from that which exists in their respective Governments; and to the defense of our own, which has been achieved by the loss of so much blood and treasure, and matured by the wisdom of their most enlightened citizens, and under which we have enjoyed unexampled felicity, this whole nation is devoted. We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those powers to 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. With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power we have not interfered and shall not interfere. But with the Governments who have declared their independence and maintain it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States. In the war between those new Governments and Spain we declared our neutrality at the time of their recognition, and to this we have adhered, and shall continue to adhere, provided no change shall occur which, in the judgement of the competent authorities of this Government, shall make a corresponding change on the part of the United States indispensable to their security.

The late events in Spain and Portugal shew that Europe is still unsettled. Of this important fact no stronger proof can be adduced than that the allied powers should have thought it proper, on any principle

satisfactory to themselves, to have interposed by force in the internal concerns of Spain. To what extent such interposition may be carried, on the same principle, is a question in which all independent powers whose governments differ from theirs are interested, even those most remote, and surely none of them more so than the United States. Our policy in regard to Europe, which was adopted at an early stage of the wars which have so long agitated that quarter of the globe, nevertheless remains the same, which is, not to interfere in the internal concerns of any of its powers; to consider the government de facto as the legitimate government for us; to cultivate friendly relations with it, and to preserve those relations by a frank, firm, and manly policy, meeting in all instances the just claims of every power, submitting to injuries from none. But in regard to those continents circumstances are eminently and conspicuously different.

It is impossible that the allied powers should extend their political system to any portion of either continent without endangering our peace and happiness; nor can anyone believe that our southern brethren, if left to themselves, would adopt it of their own accord. It is equally impossible, therefore, that we should behold such interposition in any form with indifference. If we look to the comparative strength and resources of Spain and those new Governments, and their distance from each other, it must be obvious that she can never subdue them. It is still the true policy of the United States to leave the parties to themselves, in hope that other powers will pursue the same course. . . .

Transcription courtesy of the Avalon Project at Yale Law School.

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Appendix B

“English Background of the Monroe Doctrine”

Foreign Office, Aug. 20, 1823 Private and Confidential

My dear Sir:--Before leaving Town I am desirous of bringing before you in a more distinct, but still in an unofficial and confidential shape, the question which we shortly discussed the last time that I had the pleasure of seeing you.

Is not the moment come when our Governments might understand each other as to the Spanish American Colonies? And if we can arrive at such an understanding, would it not be expedient for ourselves, and beneficial for all the world, that the principles of it should be clearly settled and plainly avowed?

For ourselves we have no disguise.

1. We conceive the recovery of the Colonies by Spain to be hopeless.
2. We conceive the question of the recognition of them. as Independent States, to be one of time and circumstances.
3. We are however, by no means disposed to throw any impediment in the way of an arrangement between them and the mother country by amicable negotiations.
4. We aim not at the possession of any portion of them ourselves.
5. We could not see any portion of them transferred to any other Power, with indifference.

If these opinions and feelings are, as I firmly believe them to be, common to your Government with ours, why should we hesitate mutually to confide them to each other; and to declare them in the face of the world?

If there be any European Power which cherishes other projects, which looks to a forcible enterprise for reducing the colonies to subjugation, on the behalf or in the name of Spain; or which meditates the acquisition of any part of them to itself, by cession or by conquest; such a declaration on the part of your government and ours would be at once the most effectual and the least offensive mode of intimating our joint misapprobation of such projects.

It would at the same time put an end to all the jealousies of Spain with respect to her remaining Colonies, and to agitation which prevails in those Colonies, an agitation which it would be but humane to allay; being determined (as we are) not to profit by encouraging it.

Do you conceive that under the power which you have recently received, you are authorized to enter into negotiation and to sign any Convention upon this subject? Do you conceive, if that be not within your competence, you could exchange with me ministerial notes upon it?

Nothing could be more gratifying to me than to join with you in such a work, and, I am persuaded, there has seldom, in the history of the world, occurred an opportunity when so small an effort of two friendly Governments might produce so unequivocal a good and prevent such extensive calamities.

I shall be absent from London but three weeks at the utmost; but never so far distant but that I can receive and reply to any communication within three or four days.

I have the honor to be

My Dear Sir, with great respect and esteem Your obedient and faithful servant
George Canning
R. Rush, Esqr.

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