Monroe Doctrine Essay, Research Paper

Monroe Doctrine

The Monroe Doctrine can be considered as the United States first major declaration to the world as a fairly new nation. The Monroe Doctrine was a statement of United States policy on the activity and rights of powers in the Western Hemisphere during the early to mid 1800s. The doctrine established the United States position in the major world affairs of the time.

Around the time of the Napoleonic Wars in the 1820s, Mexico, Argentina, Chile and Colombia all gained their independence from Spanish control (?Monroe Doctrine? 617). The United States was the first nation to recognize their independence from Spain. The European powers had still considered the new nations as still belonging to Spain. The Americans had a sense of pride in the former Spanish colonies gaining independence. They felt as if the American Revolution was a model for these new Latin American nations (Faragher 265).

After Napoleon went down, the monarchy in Spain regained power (?Monroe Doctrine? 617). The Spanish had felt embarrassed after losing their colonies to independence. In 1815 Tsar Alexander I of Russia and the monarchs of Austria and Prussia formed the Holy Alliance. This alliance was a group set out to maintain autocracy (Migill 594). Spain then demanded the return of its colonies of the New World (Migill 594). With the possibility of help from the Holy Alliance and France, Spain?s goal was looking realistic. The Americans also feared that if the Spanish colonies were recaptured the United States might be next (?Monroe Doctrine? 617).

Great Britain refused to let the Spanish take back their now independent colonies. As free countries the new Spanish-American nations could trade more goods with Great Britain. However, if Spain regains control of their former colonies then trade with Great Britain would decrease drastically (?Monroe Doctrine? 617).

The Russian Tsar attempted to extend his interest of expansion in North America. In 1821 Russia had claims on the North Western coast of the North American continent as low as the 51st parallel, deep into the Oregon Territory (Migill 595). On September 14th of the same year Tsar Alexander I issued an Imperial Ukase (decree), saying that no foreign vessels could come within 100 Italian miles of Russian territory. Although the decree was never enforced, John Quincy Adams, the Secretary of State at the time, strongly opposed it. Adams felt that many regions of North America were still unexplored such as Alaska and North Western Canada. On July 17th, 1823 John Q Adams declared that the United States should contest Russia?s Imperial Ukase on the North American continent. President James Monroe accepted John Q Adams? statement and would go on to use it in his message (Perkins 31).

The British and the Americans both had reasons to keep the Holy Alliance out of the New World. So, why not a joint declaration? George Canning, a British Foreign Minister and a representative of British trading interests, sent a message to the United States on August 20th, 1823. He said that Spain would never recover their colonies, only time will allow the new nations to be recognized and that England does not want the colonies nor wants to see anyone else take control of them (Perkins 37).

Richard Rush, an American Minister, had been asked the question, by George Canning, if he could make a joint declaration between the United States and Great Britain. Rush was startled by Canning?s proposition, since it had been only 40 years since the American Revolution and the War of 1812 was just awhile back (May 3). At first without consulting John Q. Adams he had agreed to. President Monroe favored this idea along with former presidents Jefferson and Madison. Jefferson had said with Great Britain, ?on our side, we not fear the world? (?Monroe Doctrine? 617).

Although Great Britain and the United States were on the same track, they had differences. The United States had recognized the colonies as new nations and Great Britain had not (Perkins 37). George Canning said that Great Britain would use their powerful Royal Navy to stop European intervention whether or not they had a joint declaration (?Monroe Doctrine? 617). Then on October 12th, 1823 Canning had a number of meetings with Prince Jules de Polignac who was a French ambassador in London. Their meetings concluded with the Polignac Memorandum, saying that France would not help Spain regain her lost colonies. All of this hindered the action toward cooperation. John Q. Adams had opposed the issue of a joint statement with the British (Migill 595). Adams asked, ?Why should the United States appear as a cockboat in the wake of a British man-of-war?? (Perkins 51). With the guaranteed backing of the British Royal Navy and the Polignac Memorandum the United States did not need the British in the statement. The United States would not have to share the glory with the British. Monroe, convinced by Adams? arguments, agreed to go on their own. Canning twice on September 18th and 26th offered again and twice the United States turned him down. Canning had suggested that Great Britain might promise future recognition of independent nations but that did not convince the Americans (Perkins 39).

On December 2nd, 1823 President James Monroe made his most famous message to congress (Williams 135). The Monroe Doctrine was aimed mainly at the nations of Spain and Russia. It consisted of three main parts. First the doctrine specifically states that, ??we (US) should consider any attempt on their (European Powers) part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.? The President made it clear to Europe that the United States would go against any attempt to take control of any independent country of the New World. The message goes on to say, ?In the wars of the European Powers in matters relating to themselves we have never taken any part, nor does is comport with our policy so to do. It is only when our rights are invaded or seriously menaced that we resent injuries or make preparations for our defense.? This lets the European nations know that the United States would not interfere with European affairs, such as controlling of existing colonies, unless the United States was endangered (Monroe 395). Finally the message ends by stating that the United States would not take sides in European arguments but the nation of Europe must not disrupt the Western Hemisphere (Migill 594).

In 1823 the United States had no where near the military and economic power to support such a powerful statement. Adams had questioned whether the United States would go to war if Spain acted toward hostility toward Latin America (Perkins 44). President Monroe had his doubts but responded by saying, ?It is written and I will not change it now? (Perkins 45). The European Powers were really kept out of the New World due to the Royal Navy of the British. By the twentieth century the United States had the power to enforce the doctrine (Faragher 265).

The Monroe Doctrine has been used and referred on many occasions from when it was written up to present times. It has become a much greater significance since 1823. The Doctrine was first put to work against Russia in the Convention of 1824 (Faragher 265). As a result of the Doctrine, Russians gave up the Oregon territory, was limited to 54° 40 parallel and American trade was allowed to operate in Russian territory on the North American Continent (Perkins 31). In December of 1904 President Theodore Roosevelt added a corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. The corollary said that the United States would not interfere with Latin American nations that conducted their affairs in a mannerly fashion, but if not the United States would intervene and act as an international policemen (Migill 595). However, in 1930 President Hoover created the Clark Memorandum counteracting the Roosevelt Corollary. This abjured any right of the United States to intervene in Latin American affairs. It claimed that the Monroe Doctrine would be applied solely for its original purpose, to protect Latin America from European interference. An other time the United States interfered in Latin America was in 1965. President Linden B. Johnson ordered US troops into the Dominica Republic to stop a take over by a Communist government (Migill 596).

The Monroe Doctrine also set up further protection of United States interest. The Carter Doctrine, by President Jimmy Carter, was modeled after the Monroe Doctrine. The Carter Doctrine was aimed to protest United States claim in the Persian Gulf. It was in response to the Soviet Union?s attempt to obtain a warm water port in the Persian Gulf area. The Untied States wanted to protect this area from the Soviet Union due to the fact that the Persian Gulf is rich in oil deposits, which is crucial to the United States economy (Faragher 992).

The Americans felt secure, optimistic, and nationalistic in the early 1820s. They boasted that their political structure was superior to autocracy of the European powers and the Monroe Doctrine was a message that let Europe know this.

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