Monroe Doctrine Essay, Research Paper

Monroe Doctrine

A renewal of European interest in the hemisphere caused the administration to adopt a nationalist foreign policy. James Monroe declared the position of the United States on European interference in the America, which over time became known as the Monroe Doctrine.

The Monroe Doctrine was developed because the United States and Great Britain were concerned over the possibility of European colonial expansion in the America. At the Congress of Verona (1822) the representatives of the Quadruple Alliance (Russia, Austria, Prussia and France) had considered a plan that had as its goal the recolonization of Spain’s former colonies in America. Great Britain feared that Spain would try to get back its former colonies, which had recently gained independence. This would have caused Great Britain’s trade with these new nations to decline. Great Britain, which enjoyed a profitable trade with the former Spanish colonies, refused to participate in such a policy. The United States wanted to make sure that no European nations would try further colonization in the Western Hemisphere. The British foreign minister George Canning suggested an agreement with the United States to preserve the interests of both nations. Britain’s refusal to extend official recognition to the new republics remained a barrier to such partnership. Canning began to back away from his proposal after the French government pledged not to interfere in Latin America.

John Adams, the secretary of state, took the danger of the Quadruple Alliance seriously. He particularly feared that its interference in Latin America might provoke Britain to take Cuba, which he believed in the natural course of things would join the United States. He was also alarmed by the Russian Czar’s edict of 1821, in which the boundary of Russian Alaska was extended southward to the 51st parallel and the western coast of North America was identified as a possible field for future Russian colonization. In July 1823 John Adams warned the Russian foreign minister that the United States would not allow the establishment of any new European colonies on the American continents. He believed the British proposal for partnership presented the administration with an opportunity to make a bold statement concerning the differences between the New World and Old. Confident that the British government would support the United States in any event, he convinced President Monroe that the United States should develop its own policy, which would safeguard United States interests independent of Great Britain.

In his 1823 message to Congress, Monroe stated four principles which, since that time, have been known as the Monroe Doctrine?a doctrine honored by every United States President since then. The Monroe Doctrine is the foundation of United States’ policy toward Central and South America. The major points Monroe made were:

1. The American continents were no longer available for colonization by European nations.

2. In the Americas there was a political system different from that of Europe.

3. The United States would consider dangerous to its peace and safety any interference by European powers in the Americas.

4. The United States would not interfere with existing colonies nor interfere in internal affairs of Europe nor take part in European wars.

European reaction to this policy was predictable the Monroe Doctrine was regarded contemptuously. Most believed it was egotistical, hostile, and unfriendly.

Nonetheless, the United States, barely over forty-five years old and with a population of scarcely 10 million people, challenged the European powers with a clear statement in defense of international freedom and liberal establishments.

By thus separating Europe from America, Monroe underscored the existence of American, and specifically United States, interests. He rejected the European political system of monarchy, believing that no American nation would adopt it and that its presence anywhere in the Western hemisphere endangered the peace and safety of the young United States. He also implied that the United states alone should complete the remaining settlement of North America.

The ability of the United States to enforce the Monroe Doctrine in this period was limited; however, it did have and effect on the weaker European powers. In 1824, only months after the publication of Monroe’ message, the Czar backed away from his earlier position and abandoned Russia’s claim to the Oregon country.

The Monroe Doctrine was to some degree a piece of bravado by a young country, which was still very weak in military and economic terms. It did, however, explain the idea of collective security and co-operation between American countries against external dangers. This idea would remain influential in the formulation of the United States’ policy towards its Latin American neighbors throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It became the conceptual basis of various US-backed initiatives – joint protection treaties, regional economic aid programs and Pan-American conferences; it was eventually made official in the Organization of American States founded in 1948.

As a component of foreign policy, the Monroe Doctrine has had considerable effect and has had strong support in the United States, in part because it has promoted United States’ interests. The doctrine has served other American nations, too, particularly because it state their right to independence. Because the doctrine as originally formulated made no clear distinction between the interests of the United States and those of its neighbors; however, the United States has used it to justify interference in the internal affairs of other American nations. Given growing United States anxiety about the unstable politics of Latin American countries, intervention has been especially widespread and arguable in the 20th century.

324