
DOCUMENT 9.4 | **Monroe Doctrine**
1823

The Monroe Doctrine, named for President James Monroe (1758–1831), claimed that the entire Western Hemisphere was within the United States’ sphere of influence and tried to draw a line between the political systems of the Old World and the New World.

. . . 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. . . .

. . . 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 so to do. It is only when our rights are invaded or seriously menaced that we resent injuries or make preparation for our defence. 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 defence 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. . . .

Documents, Legislative and Executive of the Congress of the United States, vol. 5 (Washington, DC: Gales and Seaton, 1858), 246, 250.

PRACTICING Historical Thinking

Identify: How does the Monroe Doctrine establish a difference between American and European powers, as seen in this line: “The political system of the allied powers is essentially different in this respect from that of America”?

Analyze: To what extent was the Monroe Doctrine an extension of the philosophy of Manifest Destiny? Explain.

Evaluate: To what extent did economic considerations shape the creation of the Monroe Doctrine? Consult your textbook for further information.