

5. James Monroe (1817-1825)

The Last Cocked Hat

Music and Lyrics by J. Matthew Gerken

Throughout modern history, treaties and other less formal arrangements between nation states often revolve around a negotiated distribution of resources. The Monroe doctrine was no different. The particular angle of this US geopolitical offer being an agreement with other hegemonic or colonial powers of the time regarding their subject nations.

Basically, the US, in the Monroe doctrine, established that the Americas could no longer be colonized by European nations. The New World was basically off-limits to the Europeans. In turn, the US would not interfere in European wars or internal affairs. It was expected that European nations would not interfere in the interstate relations of the US.

The Monroe doctrine was actually the product of debate and deliberation among the leaders of the time, some of whom were pushing for explicit foreign policy declaring support for Great Britain and some of whom thought a statement of independence in the New World. Notably, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison ultimately were not able to convince the cabinet of the time on this sweeping statement of foreign policy. The view of the Secretary of State of the time, John Quincy Adams, ultimately prevailed.

Assignments: Compare geographic boundaries of ethnic and cultural groups with boundaries of nation states in Africa drawn by colonial powers. Consider the most important natural resources to the global economy today. What arrangements between superpowers are already in place to protect current supply lines? What other arrangements might be needed in the future?