American Foreign Policy

If YOU were there...

You are a Spanish settler living in West Florida in 1820. Your family has lived in Florida for many years. Only a few years ago, people in Spanish Florida were furious when American soldiers occupied the town of Pensacola. Now you hear that Spain has signed a treaty with the United States—Florida is no longer Spanish territory but rather part of the United States.

How would you feel about living under a new government?

Settling Disputes with Great Britain

The Treaty of Ghent had ended the War of 1812, yet there were issues left unresolved. The United States and British Canada both wanted to keep their navies and fishing rights on the Great Lakes. In the spring of 1817, the two sides compromised by establishing the Rush-Bagot Agreement, which limited naval power on the Great Lakes for both the United States and British Canada.

Another treaty with Britain gave the United States fishing rights off parts of the Newfoundland and Labrador coasts. This treaty, known as the Convention of 1818, also set the border between the United States and Canada at 49°N latitude as far west as the Rocky Mountains. Interest in the valuable fur trade in the Oregon Country was another issue resolved by this treaty. Both countries agreed to occupy the Pacific Northwest together, an agreement that would be tested in the years to come.

READING CHECK Summarizing What were the main disputes between the United States and Britain?
United States Gains Florida

The United States also had a dispute over its southern border with Spanish Florida. In 1818 Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, son of John and Abigail Adams, held talks with Spanish diplomat Luis de Onís about letting Americans settle in Florida. Meanwhile, President James Monroe, elected in 1816, had sent U.S. troops to secure the U.S.–Florida border. General Andrew Jackson led these soldiers.

At the same time, conflicts arose between the United States and the Seminole Indians of Florida. The Seminole often helped runaway slaves and sometimes raided U.S. settlements. In April 1818 Jackson’s troops invaded Florida to capture Seminole raiders. This act began the First Seminole War. During the war Jackson took over most of Spain’s important military posts. Then he overthrew the governor of Florida. He carried out these acts against Spain without receiving direct orders from President Monroe. Jackson’s actions upset Spanish leaders. Most Americans, however, supported Jackson.

Jackson’s presence in Florida convinced Spanish leaders to negotiate. In 1819 the two countries signed the Adams-Onís Treaty, which settled all border disputes between Spain and the United States. Under this treaty, Spain gave East Florida to the United States. In return, the United States gave up its claims to what is now Texas. U.S. leaders also agreed to pay up to $5 million of U.S. citizens’ claims against Spain.

**Reading Check**  
**Summarizing** How were the disagreements between the United States and Spanish Florida settled?
Historic Document

The Monroe Doctrine

President James Monroe established the foundation for U.S. foreign policy in Latin America in the Monroe Doctrine of 1823.

In this phrase, Monroe warns European nations against trying to influence events in the Western Hemisphere.

Monroe notes here the difference between existing colonies and newly independent countries.

The occasion has been judged proper for asserting . . . that the American continents . . . are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers . . .

The political system of the allied powers is essentially different . . . from that of America. We . . . 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 . . . we have not interfered and shall not interfere. But with the governments who have declared their independence and maintained it, and whose independence we have . . . acknowledged, we could not view any interposition¹ for the purpose of oppressing them . . . by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation² of an unfriendly disposition³ toward the United States.

Monroe Doctrine

Meanwhile, Spain had other problems. By the early 1820s most of the Spanish colonies in the Americas had declared independence. Revolutionary fighter Simon Bolivar, called the Liberator, led many of these struggles for independence. The political circumstances surrounding the revolutions reminded most American leaders of the American Revolution. As a result, they supported these struggles.

After Mexico broke free from Spain in 1821, President Monroe grew worried. He feared that rival European powers might try to take control of newly independent Latin American countries. He was also concerned about Russia’s interest in the northwest coast of North America.

Secretary of State Adams shared President Monroe’s concerns. In a Fourth of July speech before Congress, Adams said that the United States had always been friendly with European powers, and that the country did not want to be involved in wars with them. He implied that he supported the newly independent countries but said the United States would not fight their battles.

Great Britain was also interested in restraining the influence of other European nations in the Americas. This was because Britain had formed close trading ties with most of the independent Latin American countries. Britain wanted to issue a joint statement with the United States to warn the rest of Europe not to interfere in Latin America.

Instead, Secretary of State Adams and President Monroe decided to put together a document protecting American interests. The Monroe Doctrine was an exclusive statement of American policy warning European powers not to interfere with the Americas.

Analysis Skill

Analyzing Primary Sources

1. What warning did President Monroe give to European powers in the Monroe Doctrine?
2. How does Monroe say the United States will treat existing European colonies?

Monroe notes here the difference between existing colonies and newly independent countries.

1 interposition: interference
2 manifestation: evidence
3 disposition: attitude

Academic Vocabulary

circumstances surrounding situation
The doctrine was issued by the president on December 2, 1823, during his annual message to Congress.

The Monroe Doctrine had four basic points.

1. The United States would not interfere in the affairs of European nations.
2. The United States would recognize, and not interfere with, European colonies that already existed in North and South America.
3. The Western Hemisphere was to be off-limits to future colonization by any foreign power.
4. The United States would consider any European power’s attempt to colonize or interfere with nations in the Western Hemisphere to be a hostile act.

Some Europeans strongly criticized the Monroe Doctrine, but few European countries challenged it. One impact of the doctrine was to bring Latin America under the economic, political, and military influence of the United States. It also kept most European powers from interfering in Latin American affairs. The doctrine has remained important to U.S. foreign policy. The United States has continued to consider Latin America within its sphere of influence—the area a nation claims some control over. At times, it has intervened in Latin American affairs when its own interests, such as national security, were at risk.

**Reading Check** Analyzing What effect did the revolutions in Latin America have on U.S. foreign policy?

**Summary and Preview** In this section you learned that U.S. foreign policy was characterized by both compromise and strong leadership following the War of 1812. In the next section you will learn about the sense of national pride that developed as the United States grew and expanded.

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**Section 1 Assessment**

**Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People**

1. **a. Identify** What issues were settled between the United States and Great Britain in 1817 and 1818? Which areas did these decisions affect?
   
   **b. Make Inferences** Why would the United States and Britain agree to occupy the Pacific Northwest together?
   
   **c. Elaborate** Why were the Rush-Bagot Agreement and the Convention of 1818 compromises?

2. **a. Recall** What problems existed between Spain and the United States?
   
   **b. Analyze** Why was the Adams-Onís Treaty important? What area did it affect?
   
   **c. Evaluate** Do you think that Andrew Jackson was right to act without orders? Explain your answer.

   
   **b. Contrast** How did the Monroe Doctrine differ from Adams’s Fourth of July Address?
   
   **c. Elaborate** What do you think the newly independent Latin American countries thought of the Monroe Doctrine?

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**Critical Thinking**

4. **Identifying Cause and Effect** Review your notes regarding U.S. foreign policy issues. Create a new chart and, for each issue, identify the nations involved, the agreement or doctrine, and the effects or impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nations</th>
<th>Agreement/Doctrine</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Effects/Impact</th>
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**Focus on Writing**

5. **Determining Relationships** One of the main ways you can learn about someone’s character is by how he or she treats others. Start a list of words and phrases that describe how the United States acted in relationships with other nations. For example, lists might include words and phrases like “willing to compromise” and “firm.”