



Documents for James Monroe

All of the documents below, unless otherwise specified, are from the EDSITEment resource [American Memory](http://memory.loc.gov/) [http://memory.loc.gov/]. The excerpts are all in the language of the original. Annotations in parentheses define terms in italics or add information. Some spelling and punctuation has been standardized. Abbreviations with the potential to be confusing have been replaced with full names.

Background

From the James Monroe Biography on **The American Presidency**, a link from the EDSITEment-reviewed website **Internet Public Library**:

Monroe's policies, stressing the concept of limited government and strict construction of the U.S. Constitution, were shaped in accordance with the principles of the Jeffersonian Republican party. As a result of his experiences as a diplomat, he acquired a determination to free the United States from subservience to European powers. Hence he rejected British proposals in 1823 for joint action to protect the newly won independence of the Latin American states in favor of a unilateral policy declaration later known as the Monroe Doctrine.

...Monroe's greatest achievements as president lay in foreign affairs. Aply supported by Adams, he made substantial territorial additions and gave American policy a distinctly national orientation. Monroe welcomed an opportunity to press Spain to cede Florida and define the boundaries of Louisiana. His chance came when Gen. Andrew Jackson invaded Florida in 1818. In pursuit of hostile Indians, Jackson seized the posts of St. Marks and Pensacola, acts that many persons regarded as violations of congressional war powers. In the cabinet, Adams, an expansionist, urged Jackson's complete vindication, while Crawford and Calhoun demanded that he be reprimanded for exceeding his instructions.

Monroe chose a middle course—the posts were restored to Spain, but the administration accepted Jackson's explanation that his action had been justified by conditions in Florida. The incident led Spain to cede Florida and define, favorably to American claims, the boundary of the Louisiana Purchase in the Adams-Onís Treaty negotiated in 1819.

...The revolutions in Spain's American colonies, which had begun in the Napoleonic era, had aroused great sympathy in the United States. Monroe, however, held back recognition, in spite of congressional pressure exerted by Henry Clay, until 1822, after Spain had ratified the Adams-Onís Treaty. The South American revolutions raised the possibility of intervention by the European powers linked in an alliance—commonly, but erroneously, known as the Holy Alliance—to suppress these revolutions as they had done in Europe. Britain, prospering from newly opened Latin American trade, opposed this move. In 1823, Foreign Minister George Canning proposed, through Richard Rush, the

American minister, that the two nations jointly express their hostility to intervention. Monroe consulted Jefferson and Madison, who favored acceptance. The cabinet was divided, with only Adams strongly opposed.

Anxious to assert American independence in foreign policy, Monroe rejected the British offer, opting for a policy statement in his annual message of December 1823. In this statement, subsequently known as the Monroe Doctrine, he declared that the United States would regard any interference in the internal affairs of American states as an unfriendly act. At Adams' suggestion, Monroe included a declaration aimed at Russia that the United States considered the American continents closed to further colonization. While greeted with enthusiasm by Americans, Monroe's statement received little notice in Europe or South America, and it had no effect on European policy. England's declared opposition blocked intervention by other nations.

Documents

- 1817 November/December: To Chiefs and Warriors From President
The President of the United States has been informed about the murders and thefts committed by the hostile Indians in *this part of the country* (Florida). He has authorized General Jackson to... cause justice to be done....
- 1818 March: Message to Congress: Permission from Monroe to Jackson to Enter Florida
I now lay before Congress all the information in the possession of the executive, respecting the war with the Seminoles, and the measures which it has been thought proper to adopt, for the safety of our fellow citizens, on the frontier exposed to their ravages. The enclosed documents show, that the hostilities of this tribe were unprovoked, the offspring of a spirit long cherished, and often manifested towards the United States, and that, in the present instance, it was extending itself to other tribes, and daily assuming a more serious aspect. As soon as the nature and object of this combination were perceived, the major general commanding the southern division of the troops of the United States, was ordered to the theatre of action, charged with the management of the war, and vested with the powers necessary to give it effect. ...It may be fairly presumed, that it will not be long before this tribe, and its associates, receive the punishment which they have provoked, and justly merited.

As almost the whole of this tribe inhabits the country within the limits of Florida, Spain was bound, by the treaty of 1795, to restrain them from committing hostilities against the United States. We have seen with regret, that her government has altogether failed to fulfill this obligation, nor are we aware that it made any effort to that effect. When we consider her utter inability to check, even in the slightest degree, the movements of this tribe, by her very small and incompetent force in Florida, we are not disposed to ascribe the failure to any other cause. The inability, however, of Spain, to maintain her authority over the territory, and Indians within her limits, and in consequence to fulfill the treaty, ought not to expose the United States to other and greater injuries. When the authority of Spain ceases to exist there, the United States have a right to pursue their enemy, on a principle of self defense. In this instance, the right is more complete and obvious, because we shall perform only, what Spain was bound to have performed herself. ...Orders have been given to the general in command, not to enter Florida, unless it be in pursuit of the enemy, and in that case, to respect the

Spanish authority, whenever it is maintained, and he will be instructed to withdraw his forces from the province, as soon as he shall have reduced that tribe, to order, and secure our fellow citizens, in that quarter, by satisfactory arrangements, against its unprovoked and savage hostilities in future.

- 1818 March: In response to a House resolution of the previous December, President Madison introduces Secretary Adams's report on the Independence of the Spanish Provinces. It's included here simply to indicate that recognition of the revolutionary governments in Spanish America was discussed as early as March 1818.
- 1818: Monroe Defends Acquisition of Florida in *Acquiring Florida, 1818*, by James Monroe on the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, a link from the EDSITEMent resource History Matters.

Annotation: ... Instead of apologizing for Jackson's conduct, President Monroe, in the following message, defended the Florida raid as a legitimate act of self-defense and informed Spain that it would either have to police Florida effectively or cede it to the United States. In 1819, Spain transferred Florida to the United States and the U.S. government agreed to honor \$5 million in damage claims by Americans against Spain.

Text Excerpts: Throughout the whole of those provinces [the Floridas], to which the Spanish title extends, the government of Spain has been scarcely felt.... Adventurers from every country, fugitives from justice, & absconding slaves, have found an asylum there. Several tribes of Indians, strong in the number of their warriors, remarkable for their ferocity, and whose settlements extend to our limits, inhabit those provinces. These different hordes of people, connected together, disregarding on the one side, the authority of Spain, and protected, on the other, by an imaginary line, which separates Florida from the United States, have violated our laws, prohibiting the introduction of slaves, have practiced various frauds on our revenue, and have committed every kind of outrage, on our peaceable citizens....

This country had, in fact, become the theatre, of every species of lawless adventure.... Men who... connect themselves with Savage communities, and stimulate them to war, which is always attended on their part with acts of barbarity the most shocking, deserve to be viewed in a worse light than the Savages....

The right of self defense never ceases.... In authorizing Major General [Andrew] Jackson to enter Florida, in pursuit of the Seminoles, care was taken not to encroach on the rights of Spain...

Experience has clearly demonstrated that independent Savage communities, cannot long exist within the limits of a civilized population.... To civilize them, & even to prevent their extinction, its seems to be indispensable, that their independence as communities should cease; & that the control of the United States over them, should be complete & undisputed. The hunter state, will then be more easily abandoned, and recourse will be had to the acquisition & culture of land, & to other pursuits tending to dissolve the ties, which connect them together as a savage community and to give a new character to every individual.

- 1821, March 5: Monroe's Second Inaugural Address on the EDSITement-reviewed website The Avalon Project.

The war between Spain and the colonies in South America... was considered at an early stage by my predecessor a civil war in which the parties were entitled to equal rights in our ports. This decision, the first made by any power... was in strict accord with the law of nations. Congress has invariably acted on this principle, having made no change in our relations with either party. Our attitude has therefore been that of neutrality between them, which has been maintained by the Government with the strictest impartiality. No aid has been afforded to either, nor has any privilege been enjoyed by the one which has not been equally open to the other party....

...their public vessels have been received in our ports on the same footing; they have enjoyed an equal right to purchase and export arms, munitions of war, and every other supply, the exportation of all articles whatever being permitted under laws which were passed long before the commencement of the contest; our citizens have traded equally with both, and their commerce with each has been alike protected by the Government.

Respecting the attitude which it may be proper for the United States to maintain hereafter between the parties, I have no hesitation in stating it as my opinion that the neutrality heretofore observed should still be adhered to. From the change in the Government of Spain and the negotiation now depending, invited by the Cortes and accepted by the colonies, it may be presumed, that their differences will be settled on the terms proposed by the colonies. Should the war be continued, the United States, regarding its occurrences, will always have it in their power to adopt such measures respecting it as their honor and interest may require.

- 1822 March/April: Political Condition of the Spanish Provinces of South America
The revolutionary movement in the Spanish provinces in this hemisphere attracted the attention and excited the sympathy of our fellow citizens...
- 1823, June 2: James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson
Our ministers, ...were just about to sail for Spain, & So. America.... The moment is peculiarly critical, *as respects* (in regard to) the present state of the world, & our relations with the acting parties in it, in Europe & in this hemisphere, & it would have been very gratifying to me, to have had an opportunity of free communication with you, on all the interesting subjects connected with it. The French armies have entered Spain....
- 1823, October 17: Monroe to Thomas Jefferson
I transmit to you two dispatches which were received from *Mr. Rush* (the American minister to Great Britain), while I was lately in Washington, which involve interests of the highest importance. They contain two letters from *Mr. Canning* (British minister to the U. S.) suggesting designs of the holy alliance against the independence of South America, & proposing ...cooperation, between Great Britain & the United States, in support of it, against the members of that alliance. The project aims ...first... at a mere expression of opinion... Many important considerations are involved in this proposition. 1st. shall we entangle ourselves at all in European politics, & wars, on the side of any power against others...? 2d. If *a* (any) case can exist in which *a sound maxim* (our successful policy of neutrality) may &

ought to be departed from, is not the present instance, precisely that case? 3d. Has not the *epoch* (time) arrived when Great Britain must take her stand, either on the side of the monarchs of Europe, or of the U. S. & in ...favor of Despotism or of liberty, & may it not be presumed that, aware of that necessity, her government has seized on the present occurrence... to announce ...the *commencement of that career* (beginning of that policy).

My own impression is that we ought to ...make it known, that we would view *an* (any) interference on the part of the European powers, and especially an attack on the Colonies, by them, as an attack on ourselves....