

Kongokonferenz, 1884

The Berlin Conference Background Guide

Welcome!

Dear Delegates,

It is an honor to welcome you to the 2011 Stevenson High School Model United Nations Conference's Berlin Conference Simulation. My name is Bobby Muttillainen, a senior at Stevenson High School, and I am very excited to be your chair acting as the "Iron Chancellor," Otto von Bismarck. Looking back at my last three years of high school, AP Euro was definitely one of my favorite classes. Not only did I have a great teacher, I was fascinated to learn about the enormous role Europe has played in the development of the world. One of the most compelling areas of study of European history, in my opinion, is the Industrial Revolution and the Age of "New Imperialism." Not only do I find that the political, socio-economic, and moral implications of the Industrial Revolution and Age of New Imperialism interesting, I find that the reasoning and policies behind industrial and imperial expansion captivating. Modern scholars have long debated the full impact of the industrial and imperial expansion of Europe on the world as well as the cost-benefit relationship between the moral/social effects and the political/economic effects of the Industrial Revolution and the Age of New Imperialism. That being said, I am looking forward to chairing a committee where you, the delegate, will redefine history at the Berlin Conference, a critical point in European New Imperialism and a very intriguing topic to me, as you collaborate with fellow delegates and manipulate committee to favor your country's policies of industrial and imperial expansion.

Although the Berlin Conference began more than 60 years before the signing of the United Nations Charter, the committee will follow the basic parliamentary procedures of the United Nations. In addition, each delegate will be representing their country as an anonymous delegate following their country's basic international policy rather than a specific representative of their country. Although I do not believe that the committee will be able to get through all three topics at a one-day conference (since there is simply not enough time), the committee will be fast-paced and various crises will develop throughout the conference day, intertwining one, two, or all three of the topics, so I highly advice you to thoroughly research all three topics. Furthermore, position papers will be required for all three topics. Position papers are due Friday, October 14 and are to be emailed to

SMUNC 2011: The Berlin Conference Background Guide

SMUNC2011@gmail.com. In addition, I request that each delegate brings a hardcopy of his/her position paper to the conference for the dais, and I recommend bringing multiple hardcopies for reference during committee. Further information about position papers is located under the "Conclusion" section of this background guide.

As previously mentioned, this committee is expected to be fast-paced and various crises will occur throughout the conference. Research is critical to be most adequately prepared. This background guide merely offers a brief introduction to set the stage of events prior to the Berlin Conference regarding the new age of imperialism and brief overviews of the three topics: (1) the free state of the Congo, (2) free trade throughout Africa, and (3) the international slave trade. In addition, embedded within each topic are questions to guide your research and at the end of the background guide is a short list of Internet sources. Therefore, this background guide is not enough for any delegate to be decently prepared for committee, although it is a good introduction to the topics.

Seeing as this committee occurred in the past, there are a wide variety of sources available to every delegate regarding their country's policies and situations during the start of the Berlin Conference. **Obviously the outcomes of the Berlin Conference are readily available online and at the library, but it is important to note that this committee begins at the very start of the Berlin Conference in 1884. So use your research, rhetorical, writing, and diplomatic skills to work with fellow delegates and push for your country's desires to be recognized.**

Stevenson High School's mission is to make this conference as delegate-friendly as possible and to make this a learning experience. If you have any questions before the conference, email my co-chairs and me at smunc11.berlin@gmail.com. As the conference approaches, we will be checking that account periodically. You can also visit www.shsmun.com, the Stevenson Model United Nations website, for more information about the conference. During the conference, do not hesitate to ask any questions you might have. I wish you luck with your research, and I am excited to be your chair.

Lastly, I would like to thank Mike Kim and Peter Hwang for helping immensely with the research and writing of this background guide. They both played a large role in finding the information, and Mike Kim played an especially large role with the topic overviews. Mike and Peter will be co-chairing the Berlin Conference.

SMUNC 2011: The Berlin Conference Background Guide

Best regards,
Bobby Mutttilainen
Stevenson High School Class of 2012
Berlin Conference Chair Acting as Otto von Bismarck

Introduction: Setting the Stage for the Berlin Conference Regarding Imperialism

In the nineteenth century, European and North American society was quickly changing as industrialization and nationalism dominated Western life and culture. Starting in Great Britain and then spreading into continental Europe and the United States, the industrial revolution brought about new technologies, jobs, and a dynamic economic system. As the European wealth, standard of living, and power rose due to the industrial revolution, Europe and the United States looked to foreign markets to exploit for their economic and political benefits.

Between 1816 and 1880, Europeans sought non-Western territories for mainly economic purposes rather than political objectives. The “opening of China and Japan” are the two most notable examples of Western Imperialism during this time partly due to the intrusion of both China and Japan with the threat of military force.

Chinese civilization was traditionally self-sufficient, and for centuries China had sent more goods and inventions to Europe than Europe had sent to China. During the nineteenth century, the Chinese imperial government, the Qing Dynasty, heavily regulated European-Chinese trade, allowing European merchants to live only in Canton to trade with the local merchant monopoly. By 1820, however, the British began to aggressively overcome their trading inferiority with the Chinese merchants by smuggling opium--a forbidden good in China and a legally grown commodity in British-occupied India. By 1836, the British merchants wanted open trade in China and pushed the British government for support. In 1839, after British merchants refused to obey the opium trading laws, war broke out, and British troops stationed in India and the British navy in Asia soon occupied several Chinese coastal cities, forcing China to surrender and sign the Treaty of Nanking (1842), which required China to cede Hong Kong to Britain indefinitely and to open four large cities for foreign trade. The lucrative opium trade continued, but not without more conflict resulting in European aggression and harsher treaties, forcing the imperial government to open China to foreign trade.

Japan also had a distinctive civilization from the rest of the world and seemed to be of little use for Western exploit. However, the United States

SMUNC 2011: The Berlin Conference Background Guide

took upon opening Japan as their duty. In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry arrived at Edo Bay demanding to negotiate with the Japanese emperor. Fearing naval bombardment, the Japanese reluctantly gave in and began opening more ports to foreign trade as more treaties favoring western trading interests were signed.



Commodore Matthew Perry

In contrast to the Chinese and Japanese examples, after 1880, Western society looked towards non-Western lands for not only economic advantages but also to create political empires. Often modeling the British example of taking over Egypt with political and economic leverage in 1882, Europeans began to scramble for Africa in search of political and economic benefits. In addition, the survival of the fittest and Social Darwinist doctrines along with nationalistic tensions led Western society to compete with one another to prove which European nation was the most powerful.

Prior to 1880, the European penetration of Africa was limited to the French control of Algiers, British and Dutch settlements in South Africa, and Portuguese coastal territory in Western Africa. However, in 1876, King Leopold II of Belgium pushed for territorial expansion and shifted his focus towards central Africa. As a result, Leopold sent Henry M. Stanley to the Congo Basin from 1879 to 1885. Stanley established Belgium trading stations and signed treaties with African chiefs. In response, the French sent Pierre de Brazza in 1880 to sign a treaty of protection with the Teke tribe to establish a French protectorate on the Northern bank of the Congo River.

As the race for Africa caught hold in Europe, Otto von Bismarck of Germany, a political and diplomatic mastermind, and Jules Ferry of France arranged an international conference on the subject of Africa.

SMUNC 2011: The Berlin Conference Background Guide

The countries invited to the Berlin Conference included the following, and are expected to attend the 2011 SMUNC Berlin Conference: Belgium, Germany, Denmark, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden-Norway, Russia, Austria-Hungary, the United States, and the Ottoman Empire.

The Berlin Conference's focus is the future of Africa, and three areas are crucial and must be addressed: the future of the Congo, the role of free trade throughout Africa, and slavery and the slave trade in Africa. Using prior knowledge of European imperialism and policy, the delegates at this conference are expected to come up with promising resolutions that will prevent any further conflict in the African region.

Topic One: The Free State of the Congo

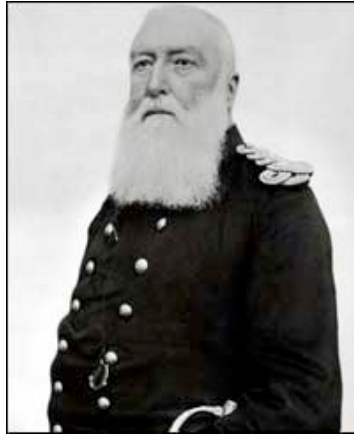
Located in the heart of Africa, the Congo is a strategic location and a source of contention amongst European States. Perhaps Europe's greatest interest in the Congo is due to the State of the Congo being the largest and most valuable piece of land on the African continent without an uncontested leader. In recent years, the Congo has sparked much interest and controversy as many European countries have reported some sort of claim of Congo territory (and often these claims overlap and contradict claims of other European nations), and a political division of the Congo may be necessary, and the place to decide upon a political division is at the Berlin Conference.

Some existing claims of the Congo include France's Brazzaville, which was founded in 1881 by Pierre de Brazza, the French marine officer sent to sign a treaty with the Teke tribe chief; the British claim in the region marked by Lieutenant Camerons' 1873 expedition; and the Portuguese claim dating back to Diogo Cão's discovery of the mouth of the Congo River in 1482. Though, perhaps the most notable involvement in the African Congo is that of Belgium.

King Leopold II of Belgium shifted his focus towards a more aggressive campaign to acquire outside territory. Although Belgium is a small European nation, King Leopold's goal is to prove that Belgium could compete with his surrounding neighbors in the quest for a world empire. In 1879, Leopold sent Henry M. Stanley to the Congo Basin. While there, Stanley has established Belgium trading stations and has signed multiple treaties with African chiefs. In addition, Leopold has sent General Henry Sanford to lobby the United States Congress to recognize the International Congo Association,

SMUNC 2011: The Berlin Conference Background Guide

which was founded in 1879 to further Leopold's interests in the Congo and support humanitarian missions.



A picture of King Leopold II of Belgium

As Leopold's interest heightens in the Congo, so do the interests of other European leaders. Mainly as a political maneuver, Portugal no longer supports the French position in the Congo and is in support of the British claim to the entire Congo. Germany, also a player in the conquest of Africa, has increased its interest in using the Anglo-French rivalry in the Congo for its own benefit.

Looking forward to the start of the Berlin Conference, here are questions to consider:

1. What is your country's position in the Congo?
2. What would a free state of the Congo mean for your country and the future of Europe and Africa?
3. Should the Congo be divided? How should it be divided?
4. Should there be moral reparations when dealing with the Congo?

Topic Two: Free Trade Throughout Africa

Trade is an essential part in the new, dynamic economic system of Europe. During the nineteenth century, trade has been growing immensely. The vast increase in international commerce is strong evidence to show the interconnectedness of the world economy--and the world economy of the nineteenth century is dominated and directed by Europe. Much of the economic development is owed to the industrial revolution with technological breakthroughs such as advanced railroads, steel, and better intercontinental shipping boats.

SMUNC 2011: The Berlin Conference Background Guide

The frontrunner in tying the world together economically was Great Britain, which already possessed a colonial empire by the early nineteenth century. Since the beginnings of the industrial revolution in Britain, the British manufacturers sought export markets in Europe and around the world.

However, in the mid-nineteenth, developing European countries such as Germany and France and the United States established protective tariffs to promote domestic industry, increasing Britain's reliance on its colonies for exporting manufactured goods and importing raw materials. After the Corn Laws (protective, importation tariffs on grain) in Great Britain were repealed, Britain's market boomed and free access to British markets stimulated development in non-Western territories. And, thus, the growth of trade was accelerated by the acquisition of foreign markets.

As nations obtain colonies and relationships with foreign nations and territories, while building railroads, ports, and plantation centers to exploit these lands to their benefit, the question is raised as to how will these non-Western settlements will be able to trade with foreign markets.

At the Berlin Conference, a topic of discussion will be the question of free trade throughout Africa as it is inevitable the attending European and North American countries will have a desire in acquiring African territory. Free trade is a trade policy system that allows traders to trade across boundaries without interference from respective governments and promotes a policy that trading partners will allow for mutual gains from trade.

From the example of Great Britain, free trade has promoted an increase in trade and has been a large factor in the strong British economy. With the conquest of Africa, a free trade relationship among European and North American countries seems favorable, as it will equally promote all of our industries.

So as you debate whether it would be beneficial for your country to support free trade throughout Africa, here are some questions to consider:

1. Would establishing a free trade system benefit your country? Or is your country in favor of economic nationalism?
2. Would establishing a free trade system lead to an unfair advantage for a certain country?
3. How could the Berlin Conference ensure a fair, free trade agreement?
4. What is/are your country's economic goal(s) in Africa?

SMUNC 2011: The Berlin Conference Background Guide

Topic Three: The International Slave Trade

Since the beginnings of civilization, slavery has existed. Many see slavery as a reliable source of cheap labor of a lesser people, while others see the treacherous evils tied with the exploitation of human beings under harsh conditions. At the Berlin Conference, we will work towards ending the international slave trade.

Since the beginnings of the transatlantic slave trade when the Portuguese and Spanish brought slaves to the Americas to replace unable natives, the international slave trade has brought slaves from Africa to all corners of the world. It has been estimated that between 1562 and 1807, eleven million slaves have been shipped from the West African coast to around the world; three million of these slaves were carried on British ships.

Although the British Empire played a large role in the slave trade, in 1807, the British abolished the slave trade everywhere within the British Empire through the Slave Trade Act of 1807. And in 1833, all slaves were freed in the British Empire. In addition, the British Royal Navy has managed to keep British participants out of the slave trade with the creation of the West African Slave Squadron (WASS). The WASS also served to impede other countries from keeping an active role in the slave trade. Several nations have slowly begun to follow Britain's example and are becoming more active in suppressing the slave trade.

Though the British efforts have not been the end to the slave trade or to slavery altogether. Only recently did the United States abolish slavery under their Constitution's Thirteenth Amendment adopted in late 1865. In addition, the slave trade is still prominent from Africa to Brazil, Madagascar, and many other territories.

Although the Atlantic Slave trade had died down by the 1850, many European countries argue slavery is essential to their economies, an argument especially well versed in countries with limited economic power. This leads to inconsistent stances on slavery by many nations. A universal standard pertaining to the slave trade would do well in establishing solidarity among the European states.

So, as you research on the topic of the international slave trade, here are some questions to consider:

1. What is your country's stance on the international slave trade?
2. What are the possible solutions to ending or suppressing the international slave trade?

SMUNC 2011: The Berlin Conference Background Guide

3. What is your country willing to do to suppress the international slave trade?

Conclusion

Once again, we wish you luck with your research and are excited to meet you. Before the conference begins, position papers are required for all three topics. They are due Friday, October 14 and are to be sent to SMUNC2011@gmail.com. Position papers not only allow the dais to recognize your hard work preparing for this conference, they also allow you to organize your ideas about each topic and are a great resource for you to use during committee. That being said, each conference and committee vary on the requirements for position papers. For the SMUNC 2011 Berlin Conference, the requirements are as follows:

1. One brief paragraph about the background of the topic,
2. One detailed paragraph about your country's relationship with the topic,
3. One paragraph about your country's plan of action at the Berlin Conference with regards to the topic (i.e., goals for who you are looking to form blocs with, ideas you want to bring up in committee that concerns your country), and
4. One to two pages typed, double-spaced.

Please label at the top of each position paper your committee, country, delegate name, and topic (number) so it is easy to organize and go through each position paper.

Although SMUNC is a fun, friendly conference, there are multiple awards for the Berlin Conference. Although there is no formula to determine awards, each delegate will be judged by the following criteria: completeness and quality of position papers, rhetorical skill, accuracy of policy, ability to develop ideas by collaboration and by working on working papers/resolutions, ability to manipulate parliamentary procedure to your benefit, and ability to react to crises.

SMUNC 2011: The Berlin Conference Background Guide

Resources

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition/scramble_for_africa_article_01.shtml

<http://www.newint.org/features/2001/08/05/history/>

<http://wysinger.homestead.com/berlinconference.html>

http://www.historycommons.org/topic.jsp?topic=country_democratic_of_the_congo

<http://www.saburchill.com/history/chapters/empires/0048.html>

http://www.alanwatson.org/somersets_case.pdf

<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/lhr/24.3/paley.html>

http://www.bbc.co.uk/devon/content/articles/2007/03/20/abolition_navy_feature.shtml

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0014292172900050>

<http://web.jjay.cuny.edu/~ehanlon/indust/index.htm>

<http://emayzine.com/lectures/Africa1830-1990.html>

<http://www.suu.edu/faculty/ping/pdf/TheNewImperialism.pdf>

<http://ww3.wpunj.edu/~history/study/ws2/set10b.htm>

<http://www.thenagain.info/WebChron/Africa/BerlinConf.html>