



HoMMUNC

Aztec Resistance

Chair: Jonathan Coden

Moderator: Russell Mindich

Dear Delegates,

My name is Jonathan Coden and I am thrilled to be your Chair of the Aztec Resistance! I am a senior at the Horace Mann School and the Vice-Chairman of the Board of Horace Mann's Model UN Team. As you have probably inferred by now, I am interested in international relations and history, but I'm also interested in math and economics. When I'm not saving the world from devastation in a conference room in some generic hotel, I play tennis on Horace Mann's varsity team as well as serve in our student council. Outside of school I try to binge watch as much Netflix as possible, which includes, but is not limited to: Archer, Mad Men, and House of Cards. Model UN has taught me what being a leader is really all about, and I hope that over the short time we get to spend together at HoMMUNC I will be able to share my love of MUN with all of you.

Russell and I have been working hard to put this committee together, and I hope that while struggling to address these pertinent issues that face the Aztec Empire in this time of crisis, that you will also hone your leadership skills and meet new friends.

I hope that you are all as excited about HoMMUNC as we are. In the following background guide, you will find a place to start your research – but we do expect that you research elsewhere so that the committee can engage in productive and respectful diplomatic discourse.

Best Regards,
Jonathan Coden

Background:

The Aztec Empire (1248-1515):

In the year **1248**, the Aztec tribe arrived in the highly inhabited region of the **Valley of Mexico**. Expecting to find land to call their own, the Aztecs quickly realized that most of the land suitable to farming was already occupied by older tribes such as the **Culhuas** and **Tepanecs**. Disoriented and lost, the Aztecs were solely permitted to settle on the islands of the western bank of **Lake Texcoco**, one of the five lakes in the valley's river basin. In return for the land, the Aztecs had to work as mercenaries for the Tepanec tribe. For unknown reasons, around the year **1315**, the Aztecs were rejected by the Tepanecs and required to leave these islands.-

After wandering for another ten years, in **1325** the Aztecs finally settled on a small, unoccupied island in central Lake Texcoco, called **Tenochtitlan**. The Aztecs, still a very weak tribe, chose this area because the natural barrier of the water provided them with this much needed protection in their early stages of development. Overtime, the Aztecs were able to build up their population, improve their technology, and develop their social system and armed forces. They created several dams, bridges, and canoes, to control the water flow, quality, and have the ability to transport themselves around the lakes and to the mainland.-

After having one hundred years to develop their infrastructure, in **1428**, the Aztecs in Tenochtitlan, the city-state of **Texcoco**, and the city-state of **Tlacopan** formed the **Triple Alliance** in order to take down the Tepanecs who had exiled the Aztecs when they first arrived in Mexico and had been

controlling and terrorizing the region for years. This conquest was so successful that the alliance then chose to take over the Culchuacans, the Huitzilopochco Empire, the Xochimilco Empire, the Ixtapalapan Empire, and the Mixquic Empire, all in a matter of ten years. At this point, the Triple Alliance controlled most of the Valley of Mexico and the Aztec Empire saw themselves with wealth, a ruthless army, and considerable land with control over thirty-eight provinces. Although the Triple Alliance was supposed to have an equal distribution of power, slowly the Aztecs became increasingly dominant, thus Texcoco and Tlacopan lost some of their initial status and could not compete with the Aztecs.-

Now, in the mid 15th century, the Aztec's missions are to "generate tribute payments and promote trade and marketing throughout the empire" and establish military outposts and more allied city-states on their borders in order to keep out invaders.- Although it may seem as if the Aztecs have an ideal set-up for controlling the entire region, one volatile city-state still exists, called Tlaxcalla. Located in the eastern region of the Valley of Mexico, the Tlaxcallans are the biggest enemies of the Aztecs. The Triple Alliance and the Tlaxcalla Empire, along with their allies, were in a constant period of fighting all throughout the beginning of the 16th century. As can be seen on the map, the proximity of the Aztec's most dangerous enemy to their capital city is certainly troublesome. The Alliance managed to seize the two cities bordering Tlaxcalla and cut off many of its supply chains but were never able to completely conquer them in battle. The Aztecs continued to expand their empire through the beginning of the 16th century, with additional stress on protecting themselves from enemies and ensuring their allies would not betray them. -

The Spanish Conquistadors:

Throughout the time of the 15th to the 17th century, Europeans were very focused on exploring other parts of the world, finding new trade routes, and expanding their empires. These Conquistadors, who were professionally trained warriors equipped with the newest and most powerful European technologies, came from either Portugal or Spain and were sponsored by the crown. Some specific Conquistador missions were sent to spread Catholicism or Christianity to other parts of the world in addition to exploiting these regions for their goods, land, and eventually their servitude. After many of these voyages ended in a successful acquisition of new territory, the Conquistadors would enslave the newly conquered natives into working for them and practicing the European lifestyle, which included their tradition, religion, and cultural behavior. After the first trips to the Americas in the early 15th century, favorable reports came back to Europe stating that the New World had many profitable resources and land suitable to live and harvest crops. Believing that the only obstacle in conquering America was disease, Spain, seeing the opportunity to open up new markets on the other side of the globe and expand their empire to a length they never could have dreamed, sent many missions to the New World with ruthless intentions.

Geography of the Aztec Empire:

The location of the Aztec Empire is loosely defined due to its structure

and organization of its territory, mostly consisting of city-states. Spanning across Mexico, some city-states are fully allied with the Aztecs while others are not under the direct control of the emperor. This system has caused in the past, and will continue to cause in the future, instability and doubt in the empire due to the concern that our loose allies and other tribes will betray and attempt to take down the emperor. This loose structure also creates a problem when determining the Aztec population, but a fair approximation would be between **15-19 million** people, making the Aztecs an overwhelming force in this Central American region.-

The Aztec climate and environment is very diverse, ranging from swampy to dry and mountainous to barren. Many small islands exist in Lake Texcoco, which families and workers use to harvest crops in this prime swampy condition for farming. The most significant and cultivated crop is maize, or corn, and these conditions are perfect for its harvesting. This landscape forced the majority of the Aztec population into this profession, which occupied approximately **85-90%** of the citizens, ahead of trading and craftsmanship. Additionally, these swampy conditions are suitable for mosquitos and other insects to live, which can quickly spread terminal diseases to foreigners. In the Aztecs early years, these diseases wiped out a significant portion of their population. The Aztec terrain is very complex to an outsider's eye, for the Valley of Mexico is surrounded by jagged and dangerous mountain ranges as well as a few small, but active volcanoes. The three major mountain ranges are called the **Sierra Madre Occidental**,

located hundreds of miles away from the lake basin, the **Sierra Madre Oriental**, located near the city of **Tuxpan** on the western border and very much a part of the central empire, and the **Sierra Madre del Sur**, located on the lower western border of the empire and right on the shore of the Pacific Ocean.-

The capital city, Tenochtitlan, is located on an island in Lake Texcoco, and was the location where the Aztecs started their empire. Canals, bridges, and canoes are used to connect the island with the mainland and maneuver through the lakes. This natural barrier gave Tenochtitlan the most protection and stability of any region in the empire. Surrounded by water, invaders are unable to reach the island without boats of their own, which are impossible to transport over land to reach the lake. Furthermore, the three man made bridges that connect the island to the mainland are retractable and can be taken down at the sight of an invasion, making Tenochtitlan the safest region of the empire.-

Although Tenochtitlan is the most prominent region in the empire, the city-states of Texcoco and Tlacopan also have considerable power and importance stemming from the previously mentioned Triple Alliance. Texcoco is located on the eastern bank of the lake while Tlacopan is located on the western shore, closer to the capital city. In addition, Lake Texcoco is part of a five river basin along with Lake Zumpango, closest to the Gulf of Mexico, Lake Xaltocan, Lake Xochimilco, and Lake Chalco, closest to the

Pacific Ocean.- This region is the heart of the Aztec empire, where most of the people live, where most of the farming occurs, and where most of the formal business takes place.

The Aztecs would get their water from rivers stemming from the mountain ranges, such as the **Lerma** and **Balsas River**. The two port cities, **Tuxpan** and **Coatzacoalcos**, are incredibly valuable for trade and commerce but are also the most exposed to the outside world and would likely be the first to fall in a direct invasion. Undoubtedly, the Aztec Empire as a whole is rather exposed, with the Gulf of Mexico on the east, the Pacific Ocean on the west, and the Caribbean Ocean leading onto the Yucatan Peninsula in the south. -

Religion:

The Aztec's follow their own unique polytheistic religion that is all-encompassing and dictates how each person should live their lives. To the Aztecs, the gods require daily recognition in the form human sacrifice and ceremonial festivals that include imitations of the gods and their mythical stories. There is a god that controlled every aspect of life, such as Patecatl, the god of medicine, Mictlatecutli, the god of death, Xochiquetzal, the god of pleasure, Tlaloc, the god of weather, Mixcoatl, the god of war, and most importantly, Cinteotl, the god of maize.- Maize is the most important Aztec source of food and serves as a means for bartering. Without maize, the society would not be able to function. Because of the importance of maize, the god Cinteotl would get more recognition and offerings than the gods that controlled less important aspects of daily life. The Aztec culture is very

much centered around faith and belief, and they believe that if something goes wrong, they had angered the gods and needed to pay tribute and win back their affection.-

With a society so influenced by belief, human sacrifice is not only a normal and accepted part of society but also many people themselves wanted to be sacrificed, believing it is an honor and a privilege to praise the gods and help the empire thrive. Anyone, of all races, ages, and statuses of society, were allowed to be sacrificed. Priests and other members of the religious system would give their own blood without giving their life as a sign of respect to the gods and to begin the ceremonies. Sacrifices were largely public events hosted by the high priests where members of society would impersonate the gods, reenact a mythical story, and eventually participate in a sacrifice. This deep belief of trying to please the gods is the driving force that compels the Aztec people to do extraordinary things and will certainly play a factor in the manner in which they conduct themselves during a crisis. -

System of Governance:

In the Aztec Empire, there is a solid chain of command that is most suitable to its specific organization of its territory. Because of the looseness of the Aztec connection to all of its provinces, each city had a **council** that was responsible for dealing with all domestic matters and had to report to the central government in Tenochtitlan. City-states that were directly under the Aztec's control would then take orders directly from Tenochtitlan, but loosely connected allies were not required to. In addition to the City-State Councils, there was also the **Tenochtitlan Council** that had

authority over the entire empire.

Positions In Order of Rank

Emperor - Oversees all action and has final decision making power

Viceroy of Tenochtitlan- In charge of the council that has authority over the entire empire

Viceroy- Each city-state has one. He is in charge of the council that has authority over the entire city-state and represents that city-state in the Tenochtitlan Council

City-State Council Executive Member- Higher ranking member of a specific city-state's council

City-State Council Member - Member of the city-state council and has a vote in all proceedings-

Status of the Army:

The Aztec army and warfare is arguably the most important aspect of their society, religiously, economically, and politically. At a young age, all Aztec men get basic military training, regardless of the profession of his father or his desired profession. In times of war, each Aztec man is then divided into a specific sect of the army, based on his social status. The ability to seize and pillage enemy villages made the Aztec army crucial to societal development and expansion, which led the emperors to create a system as complex as the Aztecs use now. In addition, for the common man that made up most of the armed forces, the only way to achieve upward mobility was through military success. Lastly, captured prisoners in battle are the main source of people for sacrificing in the religious ceremonies.

To understand exactly how the Aztec society functions and how the army conducts itself, one must first understand the complexities of the army.

It proceeds as follows:

The Shorn Ones (Cuachicqueh) - The most valued and highest ranking members of the army who are in charge of battle plans, battle strategy, and the overall well being of the Aztec forces. They are the highest respected nobles in society and have direct communication with the emperor.

Elite Aztec Warriors - Mostly consist of nobles in the beginning stages of their military career or commoners who have truly progressed their way up the ranks. They are the generals who would lead groups through battle but have minimal decision making powers. Each warrior usually leads one legion or sect of their own to have a relationship and build up trust with their warriors.

Otomies - The Mhuatl speaking natives to the Valley of Mexico before the Aztec's arrival. They are fierce and relentless warriors who are relatively close allies of the Aztecs. Although they are excellent resources in a time of battle, they do not fall completely under the control of the emperor and therefore have no direct requirement to follow the Aztec's orders. Nonetheless, they have proven to help when needed.-

Eagle and Jaguar Warrior Societies - Warriors who excel past the regular commoners by capturing at least four men in battle. They do not lead a sect of the army but rather are higher ranking warriors in the pool of commoners.

Regular Aztec Units - The majority of the Aztec citizens. After reaching the status of a man, one is divided up into different sects of the army, follows orders from that specific general, and fights with those men. These sects ranged from 200 - 800 men. To decide which man would rise in ranks and became leaders of each specific sect, a tribal council would be called and

elections would be held.-

The Aztec warriors wore **salt water soaked, quilted cotton armor** that was light enough to keep them cool during battle in the daytime but thick enough to protect themselves from weapons. Aztec weaponry consisted of **dart throwers** with copper headed darts, usually used by the royalty, **blowguns with poison darts** harvested from tree frogs, **slings** that shot rocks and stones, **bows** made from animal bone marrow, **arrows** sharpened from wood with sharp ends, **standard swords (Maquahuitl)**, **clubs** made of wood with a stone ball at the end, and **spears** with stone blades. -

The Aztec army gets its strength from its numbers and organization. For example, before every battle, the general of each sect selects a successor, so if he dies there would immediately be a new chain of command and his men would not have to endure organizational chaos.- Having such a robust army has allowed the Aztecs to maintain their empire while scaring off enemy tribes from invasion. Although the Aztec armor and weaponry has been successful against American foes, invaders from other parts of the world will have stronger metals and further developed technology on their side.

Current Situation (1519):

During the year 1518, nothing had changed for the Aztec Empire. They continued their pattern of fighting for total control with the Tlaxcalla empire while attempting to ally with or take over any province in their reach. But, as the year 1518 went on, the Aztecs begin to recognize omens that

their way of life would soon be destroyed such as, fire falling from the sky, a two headed man running through the streets, and a woman weeping while everyone is asleep telling the Aztecs to flee their land.-

Surely enough, the Aztec omens foresaw the future and in early 1519, Hernán Cortés, along with approximately 600 Spanish Conquistadors, arrived at the Yucatan Peninsula with intentions to settle new land in the Americas and conquer any natives that stood in their way. All the Aztecs know is that intimidating-looking foreigners have arrived on their continent and have begun marching up towards the empire. At this point, the Aztecs are in a total state of chaos and fear and are beginning to organize their army, sensing that they will have to fight for their lives in the coming months.

There are several key flaws in the Aztec Empire that need to be considered when evaluating this crisis:

1) The Aztecs, like most tribes in this region, had no information or knowledge of foreigners attempting to go to America and seize their land. Rather, the Aztecs had no idea Europe even existed and only had preparations for domestic attacks on the empire. This will cause a huge initial shock and panic and will immediately put the Spanish on the offensive. The only benefit the Aztecs have been able to recognize is that the water and insects in the Americas greatly affects foreigners and they expect them to get diseases, just as they had when they first arrived.

2) The Aztec Empire is so loosely organized that any of their allies could turn into adversaries over night and the Aztecs would have no way of knowing.

3) The continued dispute with the Tlaxcalla Empire could push them

over the edge in this time of crisis

Scope, Activities, and Expectations Within Committee:

This committee will act as the Emergency Aztec Cabinet that contains all of the relevant authorities throughout the empire. Delegates are expected to work together and pool their resources in order to save the Aztec Empire from the Spanish threat. Although the future seems pretty grim for the Aztecs, each member of this council still does believe that the Aztecs will defeat the Spanish. Additionally, each delegate must attempt to further their agenda and argue their position in response to the questions presented here and crises that may arise. Delegates will have the power to work together by writing joint directives and communiqués as well as using their portfolio powers on a unilateral level.

Committee will begin after the Aztecs have attempted to negotiate with the Spanish and the invaders are marching up from the Yucatan Peninsula and have declared their intentions to conquer.

Questions that Need to be Addressed in Committee

- 1) How are we going to structure our army? Should we maintain our old system or adapt in this time of crisis?
- 2) The Conquistadors are some of the world's best trained fighters. How do we go about closing this gap especially when most of our fighters are minimally trained commoners?

- 3) How should we go about reaching out to our allies and ensuring that they will side with us and provide their help?
- 4) How should we go about protecting or blocking off some of our most important cities? Which regions strategically require the most attention?
- 5) Should we attempt to reach out to the Tlaxcalla Empire and ally? Having the two strongest forces in the region work together would give us a much bigger chance at success, but will it be that easy to throw away years of fighting and animosity?
- 6) Where and of what quantity should we deploy our troops to ensure that we are using our forces as effectively as possible?
- 7) We are likely to have shortages of weapons and/or our weapons will be inadequate compared to those of the Spanish? How do we go about ameliorating this gap?
- 8) We have no way of knowing how long this war will be and we will most likely have to use every able-bodied man on the battlefield. How do we go about harvesting and rationing food at a time like this?
- 9) If the Spanish do end up taking over some of our key cities, where should we flee and what is our plan of action if that occurs?

Dossier:

- 1) **Minister of Finance** - Has power over the empire's reserve of currency, the allocation of currency to government sanctioned works, and the distribution of wealth after a successful raid. Has a close relationship to Emperor Moctezuma II. **Note:** At this time, the Aztec system of currency is mainly comprised of beans where the higher their quality, the

higher their worth.

- 1) **Minister of Agriculture** - Controls the collection of taxes in the form of maize, determines which areas are most apt for a successful harvest each season, and is believed to have a close relationship with the gods in order to pray for good fortune in the harvest. Does not believe the Aztecs should reach out for help and believes that the empire is strong enough to fight on its own.
- 1) **Minister of Public Works** - Has authority over all bridges, dams, canals, and aqueducts. This includes the safe transportation of clean, fresh drinking water. Has considerable power over the safety of Tenochtitlan due to his control over the bridges but has known to be careless in the past.
- 1) **High Priest** - The leader of the Aztec church who is known to have the closest connection to the gods of any living human. Has authority over all religious proceedings such as human sacrifice, ceremonies, and daily worship and tribute. He is the person with the closest connection to the Aztec's people hearts and everyone will most likely follow his orders. In order to keep this power in check, all of his public announcements and actions have to be approved by the Aztec Church Nobility Council, which will not have representatives in this emergency council. He will need to reach out to them to approve any of his unilateral actions.
- 5) **Viceroy of Texcoco** - Rules over the city-state of Texcoco and plays a vital role in securing this invaluable fortress of the empire. Like all viceroys and council members, he has no military authority but will have the power to organize the people in Texcoco, ration resources, and make final decisions in a time of crisis. Believes the Aztecs should reach out to Tlaxcalla for help.

Additionally, he has control over the local militia made up of about 80-100 men.

6) Viceroy of Tlacopan - Rules over the city-state of Tlacopan and plays a vital role in insuring it does not get taken over. Has the same powers as all viceroys do, but, the Tlacopan militia is made up of about 250 men and is known for being ruthless. Being so close to Tenochtitlan, he will want to ensure that he does not get taken over and give the Spanish direct access to the capital city.

7) Viceroy of Tuxpan - Controls the coastal city-state of Tuxpan. Being on the coast, he has a lot of power over the trade and commerce of the Aztec Empire. Plays a vital role in ensuring the border to the ocean is protected from foreign invaders. Known for his specific opposition to the Tlaxcalla tribe.

8) Viceroy of Coatzacoalcos - Controls the coastal city-state of Coatzacoalcos. Has power over the commerce and trade of the southern region of the Aztec Empire. Being the closest city-state to the Yucatan Peninsula, Coatzacoalcos is in the most immediate danger to our foreign invasion. Has a local militia of about 200 men and believes immediate support from all of our allies is needed.

9) Shorn One Warrior 1 - High ranking noble in the Aztec army. Will need to coordinate with other nobles and viceroys of city-states in order to best decide where troops should be deployed and what our battle strategies should be. Has decision making power over the empire's **northern** and **southern** region's warriors. Known for being violent and impulsive and needs to work on compromising with other high ranking members of the Aztec society in order to have a cohesive system of organization and

cooperation.

10) Shorn One Warrior 2 - High ranking noble in the Aztec Army. Will need to coordinate with other nobles and viceroys of city-states in order to best decide where troops should be deployed and what our battle strategies should be. Has decision making power over the **Tenochtitlan** sect of the army. Known for working poorly with other Shorn Ones and Elite Warriors.

11) Elite Warrior 1 - Low ranking noble in the Aztec society who leads a sect of the army in the **northern** region of the empire, near Tuxpan. Has about 1200 men under his control.

12) Elite Warrior 2 - Low ranking noble in the Aztec society who leads a sect of the army in the **southern** region of the empire, near Coatzacoalcos. Has about 1500 men under his control.

13) Elite Warrior 3 - Low ranking noble in the Aztec empire who leads a sect of the army in the **middle of the empire**, near Tenochtitlan. Has about 1700 men under his control and is responsible for protecting the regions near the capital city.

14) Eagle and Jaguar Warrior - Respected commoner in the Tenochtitlan sect of the Aztec army. Although he has few formal powers, this warrior will represent the interests of the commoners and establish a channel between them and the higher ranking authorities.

15) City-State Ambassador - Responsible for monitoring the relations with and reaching out to our loosely connected city-state allies. Travels around to the different regions and is in constant communication with their viceroys and key officials.

Note: The Emperor, the Viceroy of Tenochtitlan, the Leader of the Otomie Mercenaries, and the Members of the Church Nobility Council will not be represented in our committee, but can still, and should be reached using communiqués

Additional Research:

Although this guide does provide a solid foundation for the committee, additional research and preparation is certainly still needed. We understand that it is challenging to find reliable information about a time period this far back in history, but it is vital that each member of the committee has a detailed understanding of the Aztec Empire and its history. Furthermore, as we all know, the story is always told from the victor's point of view so when researching, always keep a look out for bias.

If anyone has any questions or concerns, feel free to email your chair, at jonathan_coden@horacemann.org or your moderator, at russell_mindich@horacemann.org

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