



**HoMMUNC**

Scramble for Africa

Chair: Cora Bae

Moderator: James Megibow

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to HoMMUNC XXVIII! My name is Cora Bae, and I will be the Chair of our committee, Scramble for Africa: The Berlin Conference. I am a senior and one of the three Secretaries-General of the Horace Mann Model UN Program. Besides HMMUN, I'm also involved in film and Varsity Crew, the team on which I can proudly acknowledge myself as the Senior Coxswain (yes, it is an important position.) If you had to guess what I'm doing at any given time, you can safely assume that I'm either catching up on Breaking Bad or listening to the Wombats. Joining me on the DAIS is the lovely James Megibow, our moderator and part-time GQ model. We encourage you to introduce yourself to us whenever you can; we'd be more than happy to get to know you!

Like many of us, James and I have a strong passion for international relations. Your knowledge and skills will be put to the test by challenging yet rewarding debate, through which you and the other fourteen delegates will solve the crisis at hand. In the following background guide, you'll find a place to start your research. We recommend that you use other sources for additional research, for expanding your knowledge is never a weakness. However, we hope that you go beyond the cold, hard facts of our topics; be creative and open-minded to any possible updates or solutions. You never know what might happen during the course of our day.

Most importantly, James and I hope to share our love for Model UN with you. Model UN has the power to make us better listeners, thinkers, and problem solvers. While addressing the pertinent issues of the Congo or colonialism, hone your leadership skills and engage in productive, diplomatic discourse.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. I look forward to meeting you on October 26th!

Warm Regards,

Cora Bae  
Chair, Scramble for Africa  
Secretary-General of HMMUN

## Background

### Exploration of Africa:

The exploration of Africa was naturally the precursor to the rampant colonial development that occurred in the following eras. With the explosive advancement of navigation technologies and an increasing demand for resources in Europe during the mid-late renaissance, exploration missions based upon resource gathering and Christianization became commonplace for powerful European nations. Northern Africa was fairly well known to the developed world as a result of the precisely documented accounts of Greco-Roman exploration and conquest. □□

Moroccan, Libyan, Tunisian, and Egyptian territories, despite being heavily influenced by the isolationist tendencies of the Caliphate, maintained profitable trade relations with European powers and specifically Italian city-states all through the middle ages.<sup>i</sup> Therefore, when the first major effort to explore the outer portions of “the dark continent” was made in 1341 when the Spanish and Portuguese led a joint expedition to discover the Canary Islands, the entire North African coast was already accurately mapped. <sup>ii</sup> Soon after, in 1455, Antoniotto Usodimare (Genoa) and Alvise Cadamosto (Venice) worked with the Prince Henry, also known as the Navigator, to sail through the Gambia River

uncovering much of modern day Senegal and other West African territories.<sup>iii</sup> Meanwhile, Diogo Gomes of Portugal surveyed the Cape Verde archipelago in the name of Prince Henry.<sup>iv</sup> The age of exploration had begun.

By 1485, the Portuguese dominated African discovery mapping virtually the entire western coast including Gambia, Guinea, Cape Blanco, Mauritania, Cameroon, and even parts of the great Kongo Empire.<sup>v</sup> Fortresses and resupply sites were erected in strategically significant territories and the Portuguese came closer and closer to their goal of circumnavigating Africa to open trade with India. Finally, once the East African territories of Mozambique and Somalia were located in 1498, Vasco da Gama was able to sail from Portugal around the horn of Africa to India.<sup>vi</sup> The subsequent expeditions that followed in his footsteps further mapped virtually all the coastal regions of Southern and Eastern Africa along this route. Indo-European trade eventually flourished with the addition of this vital naval roadway, and the entirety of coastal Africa was eventually mapped and navigated by merchants following the path.

However, the rapid mapping and discovery of the African Geopolitical climate extended only to the coastlines, as disease, supply limits, and hostile indigenous peoples would make inland incursions by European explorers all but impossible. Significant efforts conducted by the Portuguese in inland Madagascar, the Dutch in Senegal, and the Swedish in Ghana to map merely miles in from the coast resulted in the

complete elimination of entire explorative campaigns. It was not until the major advancements in medical and weapons technologies during the 19<sup>th</sup> century that inland expeditions found tangible success on a large scale. Indeed even today, in 1884, although the geography of the “dark continent” is mapped fairly accurately, the military, resource, and political capacity of many interior African nations remains largely unknown. Surveying these aspects of the heart of Africa will prove absolutely necessary for any nation wishing to extend its colonial expanse inland.

### **Colonization:**

The colonization of Africa was and is among the most important international dilemmas of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although initial colonization efforts began as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century. European nations would establish “forts” such as Fort James that served both as resupply stops and expressions of European military authority. However, such forts rarely grew into territorial gains until the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Once the Europeans garnered greater knowledge of African military strength and geography, they began to take significant territory from the indigenous peoples. The French founded le Compagnie de l’Occident and managed to colonize both Senegal and Madagascar, while the Danish took the Cape Coast colony from the Swedish and expanded it to modern day Accra.<sup>vii</sup> The Dutch established the Dutch West India Company and colonized portions of Western Africa as well.

However, since colonial expansion in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century was based primarily upon the slave trade, European nations relied primarily upon exerting direct rule upon coastal provinces and indirect rule upon inland nations. There was very little incentive to explore or colonize inwards as aggressive African tribes provided the Europeans with slaves from within Africa while nations such as the Netherlands and Portugal used coastal provinces to simply ship them across or up the Atlantic.

All of this changed when a number of factors that arose in the 19<sup>th</sup> century caused a rapid alteration in European policy that eventually led to unprecedented colonialism in the African states. Firstly, the abolition of the slave trade and slavery as a whole by all major European powers by 1848 naturally ended any slave-based colonialism. This severely transformed the entire purpose of colonization, as mother countries focused upon the acquisition of raw resources for industrialization instead of captured people. The quest for resources necessitates the continual acquisition of new lands, so the new European goals required further non-coastal colonial claims to succeed. Furthermore, explorers reported seeing slavery continue within the interior of Africa among traders from the Muslim Empire. The eradication of this was used as a justification by European powers to explore and conquer further into Africa. The second major factor that precipitated this aggressive move towards colonialism was increased exploration. Curiosity and academic motive combined with economic territorial desires to form the greatest

boom in African exploration since the Late Renaissance. Organizations such as the African Association provided expeditions with an unprecedented amount of funding and supplies, and explorers such as Henry Morton Stanley were finally able to traverse the continent.<sup>viii</sup> Medical advances including, most importantly, Quinine as a treatment for Malaria, allowed soldiers, citizens, and explorers alike to spend extended periods of time within the “dark continent” without having a 90% chance of dying by disease as was the case in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century expeditions.<sup>ix</sup> The last significant factor that contributed to the Scramble for Africa was military technology. Both the newly invented breech-loaded rifle and the iron-hulled riverboat provided Europeans with the military advantage they needed to take on major African armies within their own territory. The rising tides of nationalism and imperialism only exacerbated this insatiable thirst for colonial land. The stage had been set for a land-grab of unprecedented scale.<sup>x</sup>

The British led the way with arguably the first major colonization of the Scramble for Africa when it colonized South Africa and annexed it into the British Empire in 1814 in order to obtain raw resources and control trade routes circumnavigating Africa.<sup>xi</sup> The French soon followed suit with the colonization and subsequent seizure of Algeria, expanding their claim in the Algiers region southward to the Sahara, while the Belgians colonized a portion of the Congo region for King Leopold II in a famous expedition led by Henry Morton Stanley in 1877.<sup>xii</sup> Seeing its

peers rapidly encroaching towards its territory, Portugal colonized Tanzania in 1880 furthering its claim in Eastern Africa, while In 1881, Tunisia defaulted on its debt to France and the French seized the opportunity to annex an additional holding; the Algiers territory was expanded once more.<sup>xiii</sup> Next, Britain made the largest move yet by colonizing (but not yet annexing) the entirety of Egypt in 1883 both marking a major decline in regional Muslim hegemony and giving England control of the only other naval route to Asia: the Suez Canal.<sup>xiv</sup> The British also expanded their South African holdings by acquisitioning South West Africa the following year. Finally, a unified German Empire, merely a decade old, colonized Cameroon as a staging point for further colonialism and as a recruitment center for indigenous troops.<sup>xv</sup>

### **The Berlin Conference**

A variety of factors have emerged that necessitate international collaboration in the form of the Berlin Conference. Firstly, the emergence of Germany and Italy as world powers through their recent unifications has increased tension and competition between all existing major European nations. In particular, the first colonial efforts conducted by Germany precipitated great fear and uncertainty amongst outspoken French and English politicians. Next, the French claims to territory in the Congo and Guinea combined with several other political factors caused Italy to join the triple alliance with Germany and Austria thereby achieving



the balance of power envisioned by Otto Van Bismarck. Now that the triple alliance held resources rivaling those of the triple entente, many felt that precautions need to be taken to ensure that the triple alliance's inevitable rise in colonial power and prestige does not infringe upon the perceived sovereignty of triple entente colonies, lest total war break out. Thirdly, the regulations for colonial borders are altogether unclear, and international hostilities are inescapable if two nations' colonial claims grow to border each other. Lastly, the Congo question is of extreme importance. King Leopold II of Belgium claims the Congo Free State was rightfully acquired by his International African Society through treaty with local rulers. However, foreseeing this colonial claim, the French sent an expedition into the Congo West Basin and raised a flag in Brazzaville. To complicate matters further, Portugal claims the rights to the state through its treaties with the once-powerful Kongo Empire. The reasons for the Berlin conference can truly be summed up in two categories: the Congo Question and "setting the rules" for future African colonization.

## **Topic A: The Congo Question**

The Congo has long been the site of great mystery. It was the very last portion of Africa to fall to European explorers, entire expeditions would disappear within its great basins. However, after Henry Morton Stanley's famous Livingstone Expedition, the now uncovered Congo has a new

mystery attached to it: to what state (or organization) does this territory belong?

### **King Leopold II and the International African Association?**

King Leopold II is the constitutional monarch of Belgium, and he believes that the International African Association and the Association Internationale du Congo are the rightful administrators of Congo territory. These organizations' involvement in the region effectively began with King Leopold's commission of explorer Henry Morton Stanley's project to build a railway over the Crystal Mountains. This project necessitated the building of forts in a formation that effectively carved out the land of the Congo. Stanley negotiated with local warlords, built innumerable forts along the borders, and eventually managed to open the route to the upper Congo as well. On his second trip to the Congo (also financed by Leopold II), Stanley established a beachhead in the lower Congo and then proceeded to purchase and diplomatically "conquer" the nation carved out by the constructed forts in the name of King Leopold II and the International African Association. The land had been purchased or acquisitioned by Leopold and his various organizations. Following Stanley's return to Europe, Lieutenant Colonel Francis de Winton took control of King Leopold's personal holdings in the Congo. The "official" colonization of the Congo was complete. King Leopold II claims that the colony of the Congo must belong to the

International African Association not only because they built the forts and purchased the land, but also due to the humanitarian nature of their intentions.

## Portugal?

The Portuguese presence in the Congo region actually began during the Renaissance era when Portuguese explorer Diogo Cao travelled up the Congo River in 1483. He brought the local nobles back to Portugal for a political and religious discussion with Portuguese leadership. It wasn't long until the Kongo was supplying Portuguese slave traders with captives and military aid as Portugal worked to secure the port cities of Cabinda, Ambriz, Luanda, and Benguela (on the Angolan Coast). None of these cities are part of the modern Congo in question, however, as Chester University describes: "Further south, the Portuguese claimed both sides of the mouth of the Congo River, as well as the Atlantic coast as far south as the Rio Cunene. In practical terms, they only controlled a few port cities." The Portuguese believe that despite their minor presence in the area, their treaties with the Kongo Empire and Spain during the late Renaissance entitle them to the Congo region. They have never held any inland Congolese territory, militarily or otherwise, but the member states of the Berlin Conference must consider their age-old claims to the land in order to determine their legitimacy and maintain the integrity of newly established International colonial law.

## France?

The French claim to the Congo colony actually came in response to the efforts conducted by Leopold II and Henry Morton Stanley. When French intelligence received word that Leopold II was attempting to acquire the Congo territory as a colony, they immediately outfitted an expedition to the region. French naval officer Pierre de Brazza traveled to the Western Congo Basin and claimed the territory in the name of France by planting the French flag in his now namesake colony, Brazzaville. Although the Western Congo Basin is far from all the land of the Congo, the French believe that their enormous political and military presence in the region entitles them to not only this land, but the entirety of the Congo.

### **When the committee deals with the Congo Question, the following questions should be addressed:**

1. How legitimate is each party's claims to the Congo region?
2. How can the Berlin Conference best ensure regional stability for the future?
3. Should the Congo be kept as one colonial province for one country or organization, or split up to accommodate the conflicting claims?
4. Should the Berlin Conference take into account the African peoples and the alleged humanitarian wishes of the International African Society?

5. What kind of concessions if any, should the eventual owner of the Congo colonial state have to make to the international community? Free trade? Free movement?

## **Topic B: “The Rules of Colonialism”**

The European powers are no strangers to competitive colonization, however the colonization of the New World and the East Indies proved to be far different from the rampant scramble that is African colonialism. Never before have European nations claimed such massive territories so rapidly, and the result is a dangerous and precarious diplomatic situation. As illustrated by the Congo question and countless other past disputes, when nations’ colonial claims approach each other, the often ambiguous borders can cause conflicts that, at times, may even escalate to war. The scope of the Berlin Conference must include outlining legal colonization borders that the member states agree to beforehand so as to diffuse those volatile situations before they can even occur. Therefore, delineating the eventual outer boundaries of each member states’ colonial efforts needs to be a major aspect of any reformation of International colonial policy.

Another issue that has confronted the European international community is the secretive acquisition of territories, either by establishing protectorates or annexing nations. This leads to both

general confusion and often border incidents that could get out of hand without an extremely careful dispersal of tensions.

Furthermore, the International Community currently does not have an agreement for what exactly constitutes ownership of a colony. Is it adequate to merely plant a flag in the nations' name, or should there be a threshold for military, political, and economic presence in a potential colonial region to be considered "owned" by the mother country in the eyes of the international community?

The question of whether European powers should be required to adhere to any kind of international standards with regards to treatment of natives remains a pertinent issue as well, particularly, in regard to the central African nations still practicing slavery, and also to the subjugation of the local populace by overzealous European nations.

Lastly, any reformation of colonial policy, especially those delineating the extent of a nations' colonial expansion, must maintain its legitimacy in the eyes of all member states, as if the limits are broken and no longer binding, endless border crises and eventually wars will ensue. The contractual security of the legislative change that is derived from this conference must be upheld in the interest of international security.

The near boundless capacity for European nations to engage in colonial endeavors must be contained through international diplomacy else encroaching borders and rapid unpredictable changes in the

sociopolitical landscape will inevitably bring about wars amongst great powers.

**When the committee deals with the Rules of Colonialism, the following questions should be addressed:**

1. What regions will each country have the right to colonize?
2. What level of presence constitutes ownership of a colony?
3. Should there be any regulations or standards on the treatment of indigenous peoples in the colonies?
4. How should nations deal with slavery when annexing a slave nation?
5. How can the Berlin Conference ensure that its legislation will be adhered to in the future?

## **Scope, Activities, and Expectations Within Committee**

Within this committee, delegates are expected represent their respective nations on a bilateral level. Firstly, they will be negotiating with other nations within the Berlin Conference in order to further their colonial territory and prestige in the eyes of the international community while also dealing with any international crises that may arise. Secondly, delegates are expected to conduct unilateral actions to deal with domestic and colonial crises that occur either within their nation or on

the international stage. Countries should always be trying to act within their own interests and enlarge their colonial empire whether through unilateral expeditions or in committee negotiations with other powers. In the words of King Leopold II, one must try to “get a piece of that delicious African Pie.”

## Country Positions

### Austria-Hungary-

The Austro-Hungarian Empire has among the greatest infantry-based army the world has ever seen. Couple that with a massive industry, and Austria-Hungary has excellent access to resources by any standards. However, its capacity for African colonization is largely limited by the dearth of coastal ports and provinces in their empire. Austria-Hungary is far more concerned with ensuring peace between the triple entente and triple alliance than it is with the difficult notion of naval colonization given its minimal sea exposure. Perhaps Austria-Hungary can overcome this disadvantage by colonizing an African coastline, but it certainly will not be easy. Austria's wishes to maintain a favorable balance of power on the European continent guide its views on the two topics of the Berlin Conference. As a member of the triple alliance with Germany and Italy, Austria is likely to favor Portuguese or Belgian rule of the Congo over its historic rival France. Similarly, if Austria-Hungary is unable to press any



of its own claims in the rules of colonialism, it will likely support its allies in their colonial endeavors.

#### Germany–

With the unification of the German states just several decades ago, and the victory in the preceding Franco–Prussian war, Germany established itself as a world military power. Voltaire famously described Prussia as “an army with a country.” Very few nations can rival the Germans in military or industrial might, but its northern location means that Germany will need to establish staging points for major colonial expeditions if it so chooses. Germany’s goal is to both feed its blossoming industry with raw resources and establish itself on the world stage by acquiring high value, high resource colonies in Africa. Germany will vehemently oppose the French claim on the Congo region, and can potentially support either King Leopold or Portuguese claims depending upon which it feels is more legitimate and beneficial to the German state. Having colonized Southwest Africa, Germany wishes to set rules and borders that guarantee significant further colonial gains.

#### United Kingdom–

The United Kingdom truly has one major goal when it comes to African colonialism: Own contiguous territory from Cairo to Cape Town. The UK already has access to more resources, industrial power, and naval capacity than virtually any other nation on Earth, however its colonial goals are equally ambitious. If it can secure those territories either through might or negotiation, it will have access to near limitless monetary wealth from trade. England has arguably the most powerful position of any nation at the advent of the conference, but its Cairo to Cape Town ideal is a challenge even for them. The United Kingdom actually has official alliances with both Belgium and France along with a positive opinion of King Leopold II, so it will likely support “fair” division of territory based upon the validity of their respective claims. When setting borders and rules, England must do everything in its power to allow for the envisioned Cairo to Cape Town plan.

King Leopold II (Belgium)–

King Leopold II must obtain the Congo region if he wishes to establish himself or Belgium as a world power. With considerable distance to Africa and no significant African colonies as staging points, colonization will be near impossible for King Leopold and Belgium if they fail to stake a claim in the Congo. He must come prepared to negotiate, make concessions, and do whatever is necessary to acquire the lion’s share of the Congo. If

he can acquire the Congo before the borders for African expansion are set, he may even be able to gain additional territory. Also, Leopold will support humanitarian reforms due to his involvement with the International African Society.

Denmark–

Denmark previously held forts along the Gold Coast, but was forced to sell them to the United Kingdom in 1850 when the Ashanti conquered their major African business partners. However, Denmark's colonization of Greenland, Iceland, the Americas and the Gold Coast illustrate that this nation is not new to the concept of colonialism or naval power. Through shrewd diplomacy possibly Denmark can reestablish a position on “the dark continent” and reemerge as a great power on the world stage.

Denmark will support what it perceives to be the most legitimate claim on the Congo, but will also request that free movement and trade be given as a concession to the international community, as it has few other options if it wishes to trade with internal African regions.

France–

France is in a prime location to colonize North and Northwest Africa as it has already annexed Algeria and Tunisia, has a short naval distance to

desirable regions, and has among the most powerful land based militaries in the world. The French Army is enormously strong, French industry is thriving, and France could ultimately be the nation with the greatest colonial stake by land area. Naturally it will support its own claim in the Congo Question. Additionally, France must ensure that any set borders or rules allow them to make the large-scale territorial gain it anticipates.

Italy–

In 1870, the Italian city-states formed one nation of Italy. These city-states have a long and storied history of being the epicenters of trade. Italy, although a new state, inherits the strong naval tradition of its ancestral city-states. A developing industry, moderate military, and well-equipped navy provide Italy with the opportunity it needs to garner international prestige through colonization and become a great power despite its young age. Its excellent location in the middle of the Mediterranean gives it options in terms of targeted location. It may look to the East or the West so long as it can obtain passage through the Suez. It will support potentially any Congo claim with a slight bias against the French to maintain the alliance-entente power balance, and regulations that allow for open trade through vital regions such as the Suez and most importantly Italian territorial colonies within Africa.

### The Netherlands–

Few nations rival the Netherlands in their capacity to monetize trade routes and colonize distant regions. Both the Dutch East and West India Companies saw great success in their heydays. However, the Netherlands' presence in Africa is currently minimal at best. With good colonial experience, and a practiced navy, the Netherlands can reestablish its trade dominance if it can manage to acquisition even small coastal colonies. It will evaluate the validity of all claims to the Congo but will, similarly to Denmark, request free trade as a concession. Additionally, the Netherlands will support regulations that ensure as much freedom of trade as possible and might even gain small territory if it plays its cards right.

### Portugal–

Portugal formerly held the largest stake in African territory, but with its limited military, industry, and domestic population stretched thin, it began to fall behind the other rising colonial powers. However, with a potential stake in the Congo region and fairly uncontested opportunities in southern equatorial Africa, Portugal can rise to colonial power once more. It will support rules and regulations that ensure the protection of

smaller nations against larger nations' aggression to ensure the prosperity and safety of its existent colonial claims.

Spain–

The Spanish are primed to participate in the competition for Northwestern Africa. Their geographical nearness, solid army, and already existent holdings leave it prepared to challenge the French for this portion of the African continent. Its rule support will reflect this and allow for significant Spanish–African territory. Spanish–Portuguese relations are strained at best as there are still outstanding territory disputes on the Iberian Peninsula so Spain will likely not back Portuguese claims unless they need to improve their relations with their western neighbors.

Sweden–Norway–

Sweden–Norway has a masterful navy and solid army, but its distant location from the continent combined with its relatively low population leave it with significant challenges that must be accounted for if it wishes to lay a claim in Africa. The union will likely support any proposed regulations and rules that allow for any Swedish–Norwegian territories in

Africa. Otherwise, it will support regulations that support its trade interest.

#### The Ottoman Empire–

The Ottoman Empire has significant holdings in North Africa, including Tripoli, which provide great opportunity to colonize. However, it trails behind most other European nations in army organization, industry, and technology. The Ottomans have arguably the best position on the continent, but if they wish to conduct any meaningful colonization, they must be prepared to deal with some domestic deficiencies. Its religious affiliation will make it difficult to find allies among the Europeans unless the situation necessitates it for both sides, so establishing rules that ensure the Ottomans can remain in charge of their north African territory remains the most important aspect of their Berlin Conference policy. It holds very little stake in the Congo question but would agree with whichever party's claim is most legitimate from the perception of the Ottomans.

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