

The Scramble for Africa-Part One Instructions
Bismarck's Party: The Berlin Conference 1884-1885

Guiding Question: What were the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the Berlin Conference?

Procedure:

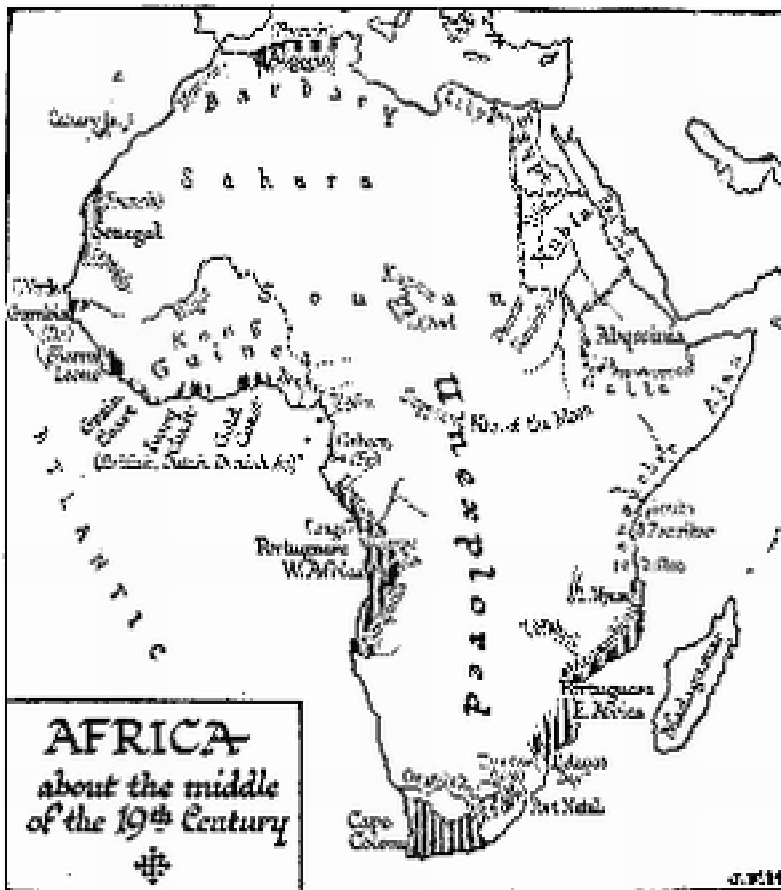
1. Appoint a timekeeper to strictly monitor your use of time, and to help keep your group moving forward.
2. (2 minutes) Have one student read the "Berlin Conference Background Information" aloud to the group.
3. (3 minute) Assign countries and review the "Scramble for Africa Rules"
 - a. Each student should get a marker and a country objective information slip. There are five different colors and countries.
 - b. Have students read their objective information, identify their starting point(s) and color their starting point(s).
 - c. Have one student read the rules to the group.
 - i. If you are unclear on a rule, use your diplomatic skills to reach a consensus of what to do.
4. (4 minutes) Play the game!
5. (5 minutes) Discuss the game.
 - a. Begin your discussion by using the discussion question sheet in this packet.
 - b. You are free to discuss whatever aspects of this game are most interesting to you.
6. (4 minutes) Review the "Primary Desires and Outcomes" & the "Africa: Before & After Berlin" sheets as a group.
7. (7 minutes) Discuss the Berlin Conference.
 - a. Begin your discussion by using the discussion question sheet in this packet.
 - b. You are free to discuss whatever aspects of the conference are most interesting to you.

Berlin Conference Background Information

“Foreign invasions were prevented for a long time due to Africa's geography, but because of its size, surface features, climate, resources, and strategic importance, it became a prime candidate for conquest by ambitious Europeans. Although Africa is physically remote from the power centers of Europe, North America, and Asia, it is surrounded by water and can therefore be reached easily from the other continents. This meant that the Europeans needed to establish rules for dealing with one another if they were to avoid constant bloodshed and competition for African resources.”

[-The World History Chronology Project](#)

The Berlin Conference was a meeting of 14 nations to establish those ground rules, discuss territorial disputes in Africa, negotiate questions and end confusion over the control of Africa. At the request of Portugal, German chancellor Otto von Bismarck called together the major western powers of the world. The meeting was held in Berlin, Germany, from November 1884 to February 1885 and included representatives from the United States and such European nations as Britain, France, and Germany. The stated purpose of the meeting was to guarantee free trade and navigation on the Congo and on the lower reaches of the Niger.



The goal of the conference is to negotiate and create a process for the partition of Africa into European colonies or spheres of influence. The European powers are interested in gaining access to raw materials and resources for their industrialization.

Your task today is to recreate this conference and divide Africa according to the interests of your assigned country.

Berlin Conference Objective Cards

Germany

The 1884 Berlin Conference to partition Africa has been called by the German Chancellor, Otto Von Bismarck. Germany is hosting the conference in its capital city. Germany has some control of coastal east Africa. Germany desires to maintain control of these areas and expand to Africa's western coast.

France

France has colonial outposts established along the west coast of Africa and extending inland approximately 500 miles east of Lake Chad. French colonial outposts include the cities of Libreville, Conakry, Dakar, and Abidjan. France would like to expand its control into Western Africa

Great Britain

Great Britain is most concerned about maintaining control of the Suez Canal (it has been under their control since 1875) and the surrounding territory. The canal connects the Atlantic Ocean, Mediterranean, Red, and Arabian Seas providing important shipping routes. Great Britain has expanded its control around the canal, throughout Egypt and south into the Sahara to create a buffer zone against French expansion. Great Britain wants to connect its holdings from the Cape (southern tip of Africa) to Cairo.

Belgium

Led by King Leopold, the Belgians want access to the mineral and rubber resources of the interior tropical rainforest in the Congo River basin. The Belgians are also interested in the ivory trade (elephant tusks).

Spain (Note: Only use Spain if your group has 5 people)

The Spanish want to maintain a presence on the western coast of Africa. However, the wars for independence in Latin America beginning in the 1820s have left the empire with little monetary funds.

The Scramble for Africa Game Rules

"I do not want to miss a good chance of getting us a slice of this magnificent African cake."

-King Leopold II

1. Each player chooses a country role card, and a colored pencil/marker to represent their country.
2. The game board is the geometric map.
3. Some places have already been claimed by your assigned country, find these places and color them in on the map.
4. The object of the game is to expand your "sphere of influence" in a way that allows you to control the most land.
 - a. Strategy Tip: If you can find a way to "block" your opponents in, this will limit their ability to expand.
5. Play starts with Great Britain, and then rotates clockwise around your group.
6. To expand the size of your "sphere of influence:"
 - a. on their turn players representing France & Great Britain pick TWO new spheres and color them in completely
 - b. all other players pick ONE new sphere per turn to color completely
 - i. stay within the lines
 - ii. new spheres MUST share at least one border with a sphere you have already claimed
 - c. before you have finished shading in your sphere, you must give your newly acquired "sphere" a name
 - i. announce to the group what you have named your new "sphere" and why you named it that
 - ii. if you fail to name your new sphere before removing your marker/colored pencil from the map, another player can steal it from you by shouting a name and then coloring it their country's color
 1. stolen "spheres" do not have to border a "sphere" currently owned
7. Play continues to pass around the table until either 4 minutes pass or every sphere is claimed
8. If a player is unable to claim a new "sphere" on their turn they must simply say, "pass"
 - a. this does not end the game for that player as they may be able to steal a "sphere" from another player.
9. Winning the game:
 - a. The winner of the game is the player with the largest number of "spheres" at the end of the game.
 - b. The winner can officially claim the largest piece of "Africa Cake" ---YUM!

Discussion Questions for the "Scramble for Africa Game"

Please begin your discussion by addressing the following questions. You are free to discuss whatever aspects of the game were most interesting to you.

1. What did you think about the game?
2. What was your main strategy for this game?
 - a. To what extent was your strategy a success?
 - b. To what extent was your strategy a failure?
3. Even if you “lost” the game, did you still “win” your country’s objective?
 - a. How much of a motivating factor was the cake prize?
4. How closely did you pay attention to your competitors? Were you aware of their strategies and goals? How did their actions affect your actions? Were there times when you were angry at them for preventing you from getting what you wanted? If you had a way to break the rules without anyone being able to stop you, would you?
5. How closely did you pay attention to the people who lived in the spheres you were claiming? Were you aware of their needs? How did their actions affect your actions? Were there times when you were angry at them for preventing you from getting what you wanted?
6. Go ahead, compare your answers from question 4 to your answers from question 5 Don’t be dismissive, state the obvious, and explain how your behavior in this game might be similar to the behavior of the attendees of the Berlin Conference.
 - a. Your decisions created colonial boundaries that will eventually become the borders of African countries. What problems have you created in these African countries by dividing up Africa based on European needs and concerns rather than African ones?
7. Discuss the aspect of “naming” your spheres.
 - a. What sort of power (physical & psychological) is connected with naming something?
 - b. Connect this power with the power given by the Europeans who went about naming everything they conquered.
 - c. What could this “power to name” do to a nation’s sense of nationalism?

Berlin Conference Primary Desires

- German Chancellor Bismarck wanted not only to expand German spheres of influence in Africa but also to play off Germany's colonial rivals against one another to the Germans' advantage.
- Fourteen countries were represented by a plethora of ambassadors when the conference opened in Berlin on November 15, 1884. The countries represented at the time included Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden-Norway (unified from 1814-1905), Turkey, and the United States of America.
- Of these fourteen nations, France, Germany, Great Britain, and Portugal were the major players in the conference, controlling most of colonial Africa at the time.
- The initial task of the conference was to agree that the Congo River and Niger River mouths and basins would be considered neutral and open to trade.
- At the time of the conference, only the coastal areas of Africa were colonized by the European powers; 80% of Africa remained under traditional and local control.
- The Berlin conference desired to form a set of rules for the “orderly extension of European influence” in Africa.
- Controlling the slave trade and promoting humanitarian idealism were promoted as the primary focus of the conference.

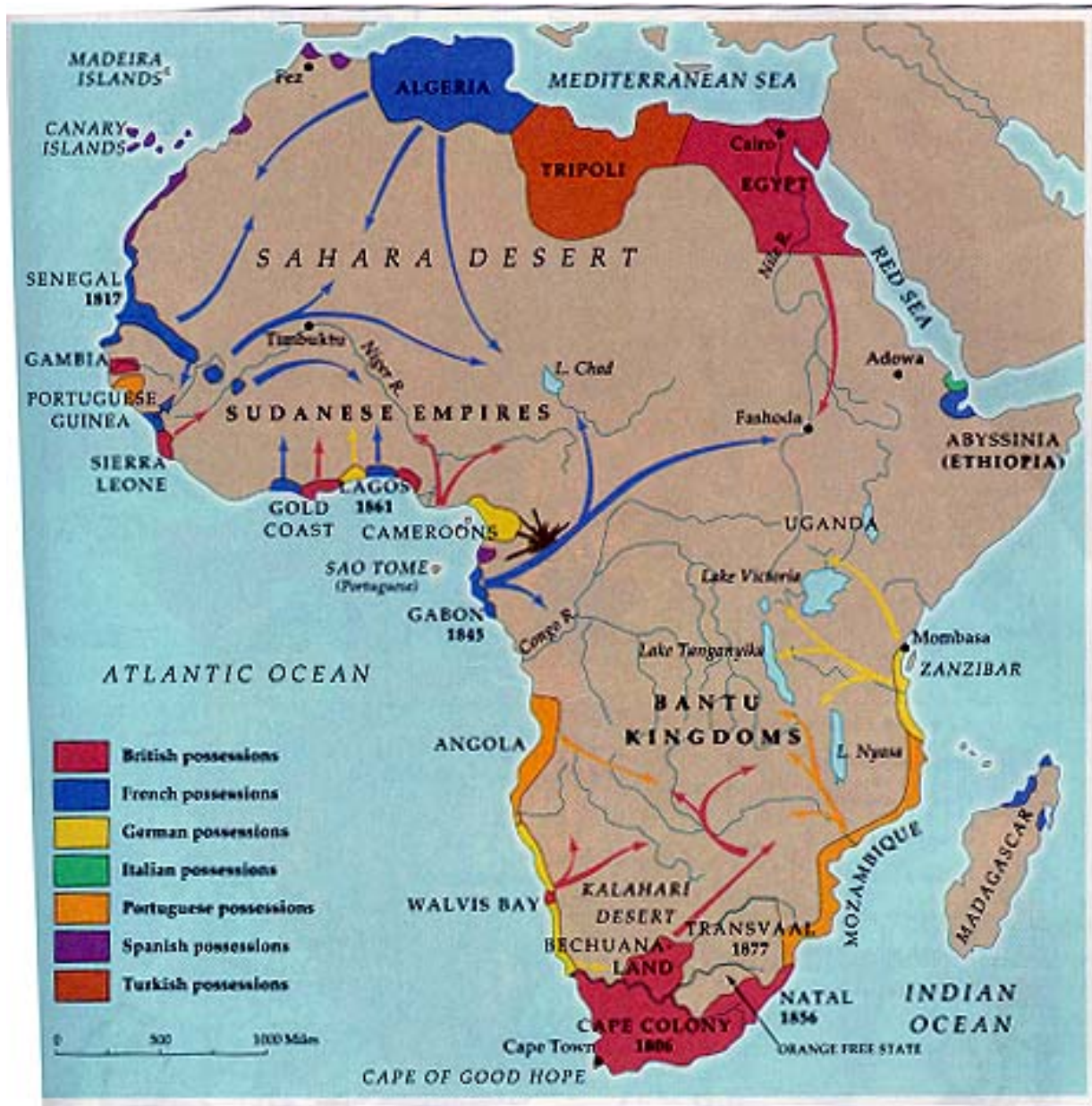
Primary Outcomes

- Produced the “General Act of the Berlin Conference”: the formal rules for the “scramble”
- Created an “Africa Free Trade Zone”: all ports and internal waterways were to be open to all ships belonging to the signatory countries; as was the greater Congo Basin-this was never seriously enforced.
- The Congo Free State, conceived as a “neutral zone” to be run by an international association in the interest of bringing science, civilization, and Christianity to the indigenes, received the Berlin Conference's blessings.
- Article 6: All the Powers exercising sovereign rights or influence in the aforesaid territories bind themselves to watch over the preservation of the native tribes, and to care for the improvement of the conditions of their moral and material well-being, and to help in suppressing slavery, and especially the slave trade. They shall, without distinction of creed or nation, protect and favour all religious, scientific or charitable institutions and undertakings created and organized for the above ends, or which aim at instructing the natives and bringing home to them the blessings of civilization.
 - Christian missionaries, scientists and explorers, with their followers, property and collections, shall likewise be the objects of especial protection.
- Article 34: Any European nation that took possession of an African coast, or named themselves as “protectorate” of one, had to inform the other powers of the Berlin Act of this action. If this was not done, then their claim would not be recognized.

- This article introduced the “spheres of influence” doctrine, the control of a coast also meant that they would also control the hinterland to an almost unlimited distance.
- Article 35: In order to occupy a coastal possession, the nation also had to prove that they controlled sufficient authority there to protect existing rights such as freedom of trade and transit. This was called the doctrine of “effective occupation” and it made the conquest of Africa a less bloody process.
- They also agreed to put a stop to the slave trade, that “these territories may not serve as a market or means of transit for the trade in slaves, of whatever race they may be”
- This new map of the continent was superimposed over the one thousand indigenous cultures and regions of Africa.
 - The new countries lacked rhyme or reason and divided coherent groups of people and merged together disparate groups who really did not get along.
- Great Britain desired a Cape-to-Cairo collection of colonies and almost succeeded though their control of Egypt, Sudan (Anglo-Egyptian Sudan), Uganda, Kenya (British East Africa), South Africa, and Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Botswana (Rhodesia). The British also controlled Nigeria and Ghana (Gold Coast).
- France took much of western Africa, from Mauritania to Chad (French West Africa) and Gabon and the Republic of Congo (French Equatorial Africa).
- Belgium and King Leopold II controlled the Democratic Republic of Congo (Belgian Congo).
- Portugal took Mozambique in the east and Angola in the west.
- Italy's holdings were Somalia (Italian Somaliland) and a portion of Ethiopia.
- Germany took Namibia (German Southwest Africa) and Tanzania (German East Africa).
- Spain claimed the smallest territory - Equatorial Guinea (Rio Muni).
- By 1914, the conference participants had fully divided Africa among themselves into fifty countries.
- After colonial rule was firmly established in Africa, the only change in possessions came after World War I. Germany's four colonies were placed under the League of Nations, which established a mandate system for other colonizers to administer the territories

Africa: Before & After Berlin

Map of Africa 1873



Map of Africa 1913

Traditional African Ethnic Boundaries with Modern National Boundaries



Berlin Conference Discussion Questions

1. There were two WWI “preventative issues” at the conference: 1-Bismarck wanted his potential enemies to be occupied outside of Europe, and 2-Bismarck wanted to prevent off-continent wars between colonial powers.
 - a. Were these good goals for Germany?
 - b. for Europe?
 - c. To what extent do you feel they were successful in delaying total war in Europe?
 - d. To what extent do you feel they accelerated total war in Europe?
2. To what extent do you agree with the statement, “The Berlin Conference is one of the most clear examples of the assumptions and preconceptions of this era, and its effects on Africa can still be seen today.”
3. **Disregarding the benefits of historical hindsight:** if you were a European citizen in 1885, how do you think you would feel about the humanitarian aspects of the General Act of the Berlin Conference? (anti-slavery, colonial powers must protect and support natives, freedom of religion, free centers of cultural and scientific exchange, ect...)
 - a. Define how your opinion might be different depending on which European country you lived in.
 - b. If you were an African citizen, how might you feel about the humanitarian aspects of the General Act?
4. What would you say were the 3 main purposes of the Berlin Conference?
5. Look through the notes to determine what the European powers officially stated as the purposes of the Berlin Conference. Were these their real purposes?
6. Based on your pre-reading, how does knowledge of the tragedy that the “Congo Free State” affect your analysis this decision?
7. Hypothetically speaking, do you think a similar conference could be held today? Would the nations of the modern world meet to discuss how to divide up and control another region of the world? Why or why not?