

The Berlin Conference, 1884

Names:

Country assigned to you:

Color assigned to you:

Back ground: In 1884 at the request of Portugal, German chancellor Otto von Bismark called together the major western powers of the world to negotiate questions and end confusion over the control of Africa. Bismark appreciated the opportunity to expand Germany's sphere of influence over Africa and desired to force Germany's rivals to struggle with one another for territory.

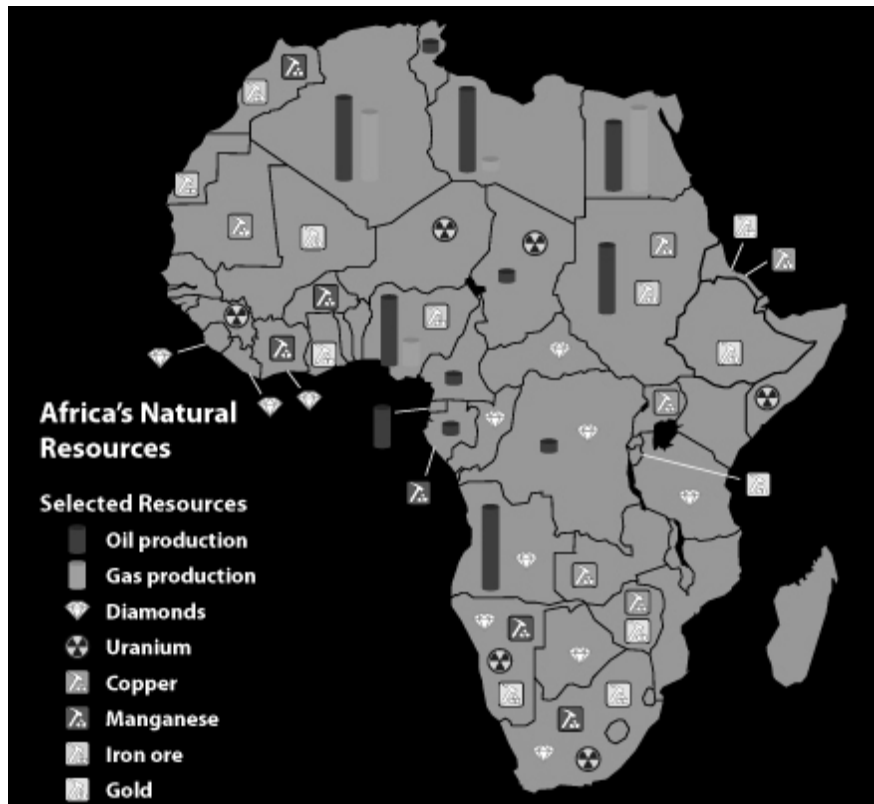
At the time of the conference, 80% of Africa remained under traditional and local control. What ultimately resulted was a hodgepodge of geometric boundaries that divided Africa into fifty irregular countries. This new map of the continent was superimposed over the one thousand indigenous cultures and 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.

Today, we are going to reenact that conference. First, complete the following tasks.

1. Circle on the map of Europe below the country that you represent.



2. What parts of Africa are closest to you? Why might you be most interested in what happens in those areas?



3. Based on the above map, what parts of Africa do you think are the most “valuable”?

4. What arguments would your country make as to why they should have some influence over the way Africa is divided?

As a class, we will now go around the room and each team gets to “claim” a country in Africa. Make sure you have a good reason for wanting the area you want. At least half of the groups must agree for you to take claim to an area. You may negotiate with other teams for different areas. Feel free to use your book to see what areas you already have influence over in 1884. Afterwards, answer the questions below.

5. What do you notice about the countries at this conference? What is ironic about them?

6. Motivations for the colonization of Africa? List and describe at least three.

Use this map to color in the areas you “get” at the conference.



Lastly, we will look at the “real” map of what happened in 1884. How close did you get to what really happened?

What do you think were the short term effects of dividing Africa among the European powers? What do you think the long term effects have been?