

JCC: TRIPLE ALLIANCE



Letter to the People:

Honorable Delegates,

Welcome to Fifth Annual Freeman Model United Nations Conference. We are honored to have you participate in the Paraguayan War Joint Crisis Committee as representatives of the Triple Alliance of Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina.

We are your chairs, Finnegan Ragland and Chandan Kuchina, students here at Douglas Freeman High School. Finnegan is a Sophomore in the Leadership Center at Freeman and has been participating in Model United Nations for two years. He has attended several conferences as a delegate, and served on crisis staff for FreeMUN IV. Chandan is a junior in the Leadership Center at Freeman High School and has been doing MUN since 6th grade, and has been a FreeMUN chair for the past two conferences.

The Paraguayan War is a fascinating, yet often forgotten conflict between the nations of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay. While committees based on historical events in Europe, Asia, and North America are common in Model UN, events in South America are underestimated for their complexity, political intrigue, and suitability for a fast-paced MUN simulation. The Paraguayan War is a perfect example of that. The Triple Alliance committee follows the actions Brazil, Argentina, and the Colorado Party Invasion take in order to combat Paraguay and the nationalists within Uruguay. As a delegate in the Triple Alliance, your job is to ensure Uruguay remains under the control of the Brazilian-backed Colorado Party, and use the alliance's militaries to defend Paraguay's attacks, and ultimately defeat them. This committee starts **January 4, 1865**, a few weeks after Paraguay invaded Mato Grosso, Brazil.

Delegates, while participating in this committee, remember that all opinions should be based on your assigned position, not your personal beliefs. Submitting position papers for grading is optional, but is necessary in order to receive awards. Make sure your position papers are in MLA formatting and doubled-spaced.

Thank you for participating in FreeMUN V! We are looking forward to meeting you all and having a great conference! For any questions or submitting position papers, please email, jccalliancefreemunv@gmail.com

Best regards,

Finnegan Ragland and Chandan Kuchina



Douglas S. Freeman High School Model United Nations Conference

Historical JCC: Paraguayan War

Triple Alliance of Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay

Topic I: *Maintaining Control of Uruguay and Colorado Party Power*

Topic II: *Defending Mato Grosso and Defeating Paraguay*

Introduction

The Paraguayan War, also known as the War of the Triple Alliance, was a South American Conflict that lasted from 1864 to 1870. The war was fought between Paraguay and the Triple Alliance of Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguayan Colorado Party. It began due to a combination of Paraguayan and Brazilian hostility and Argentina's ongoing attempt to meddle in and ultimately overthrow the nationalist government of Uruguay.

Decades earlier, as the colonies of South America gradually gained independence from Spain and Portugal, the young nations competed for land, natural resources, and influence. Paraguayan and Uruguayan nationalists, with their shared interests and beliefs, remained allied and powerful for a long period of time. When Uruguay's Colorado Party began a coup against the nationalist government, both Argentina and Brazil saw it as an opportunity to take control over Uruguay and weaken the military powerhouse of Paraguay. For these reasons, Argentina and Brazil joined forces with the Colorados, forming the Triple Alliance.

The Triple Alliance worried Paraguay. They felt that if their allies in Uruguay fell to the interests of the Colorados, the delicate power balance in South America would be threatened, tipping in the favor of their Northern neighbor, Brazil.

By the start of the committee, the 1863-1865 invasion of Uruguay, led by the Colorados (the country's anti-nationalist party), was underway. However, that success came with consequences. In December 1864, after issuing many failed ultimatums, Paraguay, which was aligned with Uruguay's incumbent National or "Blanco" party, began an invasion of the Brazilian province of Mato Grosso in retaliation to Brazil's support of the Colorados. Mato Grosso borders Paraguay just to the North and is rich in natural resources, but extremely underdeveloped and undefended, making it an easy target for an invasion. Paraguay's 1864 invasion of Mato Grosso was the official start of the Paraguayan War, a six-year conflict which is commonly deemed the bloodiest in Latin American history, with some estimates placing casualties as high as 1.2 million for

Paraguay alone. Even today, 160 years later, Paraguay has not fully recovered from the damage and atrocities of this bloody conflict.

By the start of the committee, the Colorado Party coup in Uruguay is nearing victory, and Paraguay has begun their invasion of Mato Grasso. The war has just begun. As representatives of the Triple Alliance, it is your responsibility to gain political control of Uruguay and secure victory over Paraguay.

Topic I: Maintaining Control of Uruguay and Colorado Party Power

History of Uruguayan Power and the Ongoing Coup

Uruguay, which achieved independence from Spain and Portugal in 1828, has been plagued with political strife since its beginning. Since independence, the country has experienced a power struggle between its two main parties: the Blancos and the Colorados. The National Party, or “Blancos” was a conservative nationalist party. The Colorado Party was much more liberal. By the 1860s, the Blancos were the ruling party in Uruguay. The party, led by President Atanasio Aguirre, was closely aligned and allied with the Paraguayan Government. Both factions shared nationalistic and conservative views. In 1863, Venancio Flores, a former president of Uruguay, began a Argentinian-backed

invasion of Uruguay that sought to overthrow the Blanco Party.

Flores was the president of Uruguay and member of the Colorado Party for a brief period in 1854-1855 before being ousted by the Blancos and escaping to Argentina. He spent the next eight years in Argentina, rising up the ranks in the military and eventually becoming a general. During his time in Argentina, the Unitarian party, which aligned with Flores’ more liberal beliefs, came to power under the leadership of Bartolomé Mitre. With Flores’ power in the Argentine military and government, he decided to return to Uruguay and retake control of the country for the Colorado Party. Since Argentina aligned with the beliefs of the Colorados, they fully supported Flores’ invasion and provided him with military support, allowing him to begin his invasion of Uruguay.

Shortly into this invasion, the violence began to spread north into Brazil. The coup caused instability and bloodshed throughout Uruguay, including along the northern border with Brazil. The empire was furious about the violence within Uruguay and sent demands and ultimatums to the ruling Blanco Party. All of these demands were refused. On October 12, 1864, Brazil, being fed up with the fighting along their border, officially announced their support of Flores’ Colorado Party invasion. Although enemies in the past, both Argentina and Brazil agreed with the Colorado Party, feeling that they would have more influence over the region if Flores was in charge.

Status of Colorado Invasion and Coup in 1865

By January 4, 1865, the start date of this committee, the allied forces of Brazil, Argentina, and the Colorado Party had made great progress in their invasion. Flores' army took over Uruguay town by town starting from the Argentinian border in the West. The Brazilian army and navy, led by Admiral Joaquim Lisboa, invaded from the North.

Figure I: Route Taken by Allied Brazilian Land Forces.



Currently in committee, the allied armies have taken most of Northern and Western Uruguay, including the major cities of Jaguarão, Melo, Salto, and Paysandú. After their most recent siege of Paysandú, one of Uruguay's largest cities, both Flores' and the Brazilian Army are now approaching Montevideo, the nation's capital and largest city.

Figure II: Montevideo, Uruguay's Capital, in 1865.



Achieving and Maintaining Colorado Control

Delegates, it is January 5, 1865. The Uruguayan invasion is now in your hands. The Triple Alliance's troops will arrive in Montevideo in just a few weeks time at the rate they are traveling. When they arrive in the capital, it is crucial for the committee to be prepared. Should the Triple Alliance military lay siege on the city or perform a more covert operation? More men may be lost in a siege, but a stealthy operation is less likely to be successful. Regardless of what route you take, the Blanco leaders of Uruguay must be dealt with. They could be killed, but risks turning them into martyrs for the nationalist cause. Instead, they could be exiled from Uruguay, but that risks them becoming important assets to Paraguay. Lastly, if the invasion of Uruguay is a success, you must be able to retain the territory and prevent the people from rebelling. This means you must balance external affairs with Paraguay while maintaining stability in Uruguay. Should the country focus on improving the military and defense, or on enacting policies that benefit the people?

As delegates, all of these decisions and more are yours, but you must consider the consequences for every action carefully.

Questions to Consider:

1. What military strategies/tactics should be used to capture Montevideo? Who should lead the siege?
2. If the Siege of Montevideo is successful, how should high ranking Blanco officials be dealt with?

3. What policies could be created to ensure the Colorado Party stays in control?
4. How much influence should Brazil and Argentina have over a new Colorado government in Uruguay?
5. What military measures and offensives should be used to continue the success of the Colorado invasion?

Topic II: Defending Mato Grosso and Defeating Paraguay

Introduction

The Paraguayan War (1864-1870) or War of the Triple Alliance was an immense conflict that significantly restructured the geopolitics and overall landscape of South America. The origins of the actual war are rooted in the early 1860s as the president of Paraguay, Solano López, sought to increase Paraguayan dominance in the region. López viewed the growing influence of Brazil and Argentina as an open and direct threat to the Paraguayan sovereignty, leading to escalated tensions.

In Brazil, the Mato Grosso region emerged as a focal point of contention. The region's strategic importance, a largely undefended area with coveted natural resources, created much conflict. In 1864, López declared war on Brazil and attacked Mato Grosso as a result of Brazil and Argentina's intervention in a coup in Uruguay. Brazil had stopped an

anti-nationalist group that Paraguay was allied with from overthrowing the presiding nationalist government known as the “Blanco Party” which had maintained good relations with the Brazilian government. The presence of Brazilian troops in the region was also perceived as a direct challenge to Paraguayan interests. By late 1864, Paraguay had mobilized its forces, leading to a series of confrontations that further inflamed hostilities.

The formal outbreak of war occurred on December 13, 1864, when Paraguay invaded the Brazilian province of Mato Grosso. This act of aggression catalyzed the formation of an alliance of three nations formally called the Triple Alliance, with Brazil, Argentina, and the Uruguayan anti-nationalist group known as the Colorados. Their objective was to unite against Paraguay and challenge its expansionist character. The subsequent battles, especially with the Siege of Humaitá and the devastating confrontations at Tuyutí, further exhibit the conflict's intensity and impact.

The Importance of Mato Grosso

Within the beginning phases of the conflict, Paraguay aimed to exert pressure on Brazil by threatening Mato Grosso. One of the first paramount confrontations in this region was seen with the Battle of Corumbá in January of 1865, as Paraguayan forces attempted to successfully seize the Brazilian fortifications in the town of Corumbá. After Paraguay won, they also tried to reach the capital of the province, Cuiabá, but were unsuccessful. However, the Paraguayan soldiers were able to conquer the many diamond and gold mines disrupting the flow

of resources like these in Brazil. Although the Paraguayans did not achieve all the victories they desired, their failed endeavor shows the strategic significance of Mato Grosso and the need for Brazilian forces to secure this region.

Understanding the sheer importance of Mato Grosso is crucial for the Brazilian side to maintain its logistical and strategic position. The construction of new and improved fortifications in addition to the deployment of additional troops was vital. Throughout the war, the Brazilian military fortified prime locations in Mato Grosso. For example, the town of Dourados was important due to its southern location near Paraguay, its role in defense, and its overall symbolic value. Similar tactics were applied in the Siege of Uruguaiana (August 15 to October 18, 1865). This was a pivotal engagement in the Paraguayan War, in which Brazilian forces defended the strategically important city against Paraguayan attacks. Commanded by General Osório, the Brazilian troops stood strong and fortified their positions with earthworks and artillery, to where they were effectively repelling a larger Paraguayan force led by José María Delgado. Despite facing harsh conditions and supply shortages, the Brazilians employed guerrilla tactics and coordinated counterattacks, putting up a resilience that ultimately led to Paraguay failure. Additionally, Brazil fortified extremely strategic points along the Paraguay River, including the Fort of Coimbra during the Battle of Corumbá, as mentioned previously. These fortifications were crucial in being able to control Mato Grosso; the military fortification granted

Brazil the opportunity to secure and protect various supply routes along with providing a strong defensive shield against prevailing Paraguayan attacks. Although the Brazilian troops would have to abandon the fort in the end, these examples showcase how essential fortifications are to Brazilian defense and that Brazil could indeed hold its own against the mighty Paraguayan force.

The Paraguayan Threat

Paraguay, under the leadership of President Francisco Solano López, employed a combination of many different conventional and guerrilla warfare tactics, presenting a formidable challenge to those involved in the Triple Alliance. López's strategy involved a series of bold and aggressive maneuvers whose goal was to fully destabilize the alliance's position.

One noteworthy example of this esteemed and dangerous Paraguayan military strategy was seen with the memorable Battle of Itá Ybaté on August 19, 1866. In this offensive, Paraguayan forces, led by the Paraguayan president, executed an ambush attack on both Brazilian and Argentine troops posted near the town of Itá Ybaté. Despite the fact that they were heavily outnumbered, the Paraguayan forces managed to inflict immense casualties and delay the further advance of the Triple Alliance troops. This signaled the effectiveness of López's tactics and the urgent need for the Triple Alliance to adapt to the many Paraguayan approaches. (Note: at the start of the committee, this event had not happened yet)

Additionally, the Siege of Humaitá occurred April 17, 1867 to July 25, 1868

when Paraguayan forces entrenched themselves within the fortifications of Humaitá, creating an almost unstopable and formidable defensive position. The prolonged siege included varied coordinated attacks and defensive measures and was one of the longest and most grueling engagements of the war by far. The eventual Brazilian victory at Humaitá demonstrated the importance of continuous military pressure and the importance of strategic planning.

Questions to Consider:

1. How would the Triple Alliance react to Paraguay's expansionism in the Mato Grosso and what steps should the allies take in extending or containing their military campaign, based on the movements of Paraguay?
2. Given Paraguay's potential strategies to combat Brazilian naval dominance, what proactive measures can the Triple Alliance take to enhance their naval capabilities, secure key waterways, and disrupt Paraguayan supply routes?
3. How would the Triple Alliance ensure security along the supply lines so that Paraguay cannot create a safe passageway onto Uruguayan

territory, and what is the tactic of intelligence gathering that could be used to monitor and counter Paraguayan movements?

4. Given the fragile involvement of Argentina in the war, what would be the best options for the Triple Alliance to either secure its position as an ally, or reduce the risks brought about by its neutrality or partial support to Paraguay?
5. In anticipation of Paraguayan efforts to fortify key military installations like the Fortress of Humaitá, what offensive strategies and resources should the Triple Alliance prioritize to effectively disrupt these defenses and maintain pressure on Paraguayan forces?

Further Reading

[The Road to Armageddon: Paraguay Versus the Triple Alliance, 1866–70](#), and [The Paraguayan War: Causes and Early Conduct](#), both by Thomas L. Whigham. 2 very long and comprehensive books that cover the history of the war. We would recommend skimming these books using the search tool for mentions of your position if you are struggling with research.

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