



The Fall of the Incan Empire Background Guide

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Letter From the Chair

Hello Delegates,

Welcome to EagleMUNC IX! My name is Parker Keller and I am so excited to be your chair for this year's competition! I am currently a sophomore at Boston College majoring in Sociology and minoring in Management and Leadership, as well as Managing for Social Impact and Public Good. A little bit about me is that I'm from Melville, NY, a small town on Long Island, and I love to workout, explore new music, and play soccer. I joined EagleMUNC on a whim last year, and could not be happier with my decision. Due to COVID-19, I was unable to experience the conference last year. However, this year I will finally get to see what the organization is all about, and I could not be more pumped to start my journey with all of you! I have heard so many amazing stories from past years' competitions, and can't wait to have that experience.

Our committee will focus on the Spanish Invasion of the Incan Empire, and we will hear discussions from perspectives of both the Spanish and the Inca. I see this committee as a very unique opportunity to approach an historical event from both the "winning" and "losing" sides, and possibly even rewrite what actually happened in the Incan Empire all those centuries ago. You and the other members of the committee will take a stance on either the Inca side or the Spanish side to the conflict, and decide how to approach the political, social, and religious aspects of the attempted Spanish colonization. You will discuss the advantages and disadvantages that each entity is facing, as well as whether or not each side can be trusted by the other.

I look forward to getting to know all of you better throughout the competition and hope this committee can immerse, entertain, and educate you on everything that Model UN has to

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offer. Remember to have fun this weekend, and if you have any questions about anything at all, don't hesitate to reach out using my email below!

Best,

Parker Keller



Background Information

Historical Background: Incan Empire

The Inca created the largest empire in pre-Columbian America, ruling over the territory of modern day Peru, parts of Bolivia, Argentina, Ecuador, Colombia and Chile and an estimated population of 34 million.¹ Before the organization of the Inca people into a nation state, the Inca were an isolated pastoral tribe that lived around the Cusco area of modern day Peru. According to Incan mythology, the Inca people subsisted off of animal husbandry for centuries, raising animals like alpacas and llamas in isolation before the mystical founder of the Kingdom of Cusco, Manco Capac, built the city state of Cusco. Hundreds of years later, the Kingdom of Cusco underwent a rapid expansion led by Sapa Inca (supreme leader) Pachacuti Yupanqui. Under Pachacuti's leadership, the armies of Cusco conquered the nearby tribe of Chancas, and consolidated the territory of Peru. After this, Pachacuti reorganized the government of Cusco from an absolute monarchy to a Tahuantinsuyu (federal government). The reorganized government consisted of a strong federal branch with the emperor as the highest power, and divisions of territorial governments for the lands that the Incans conquered. Pachacuti also used espionage as a major aspect of Incan dominance. Using spies and envoys, Pachacuti learned about government formation, technology, military organization, and economic goods from the Inca's neighbors. This use of espionage allowed the Kingdom of Cusco to build an incredibly strong army, using military invasions only when surrounding tribes did not submit peacefully. In addition, Pachacuti is believed to have built the mountain fortress of Machu Picchu as a summer getaway for himself.

¹ Cobo Bernabé, *History of the Inca Empire: an Account of the Indian's Customs and Their Origin, Together with a Treatise on Inca Legend* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979).

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After the rule of Pachahuti, The Kingdom of Cusco was officially established as the Incan Empire, and territorial conquest continued across the Andes. The Peruvian coast was conquered by Tupac Inca when he annexed the Kingdom of Chimor, allowing the Inca to have access to modern day Ecuador and Colombia. His son Huayna Capac continued into south central Bolivia and northern Chile. However, the Inca were held at this point in Chile by the Mapuche, another native South American people that withstood the Incan forces and maintained independence. The last push of the Incan empire's expansion was to the Chinchipe river in the Amazon basin in 1527, where they were thwarted by the Shumar people.

By the end of the 1520's the Incan empire seemed to be in a strong position to continue expanding across South America. However, the landing of the Spanish conquistadors in Panama planted the seeds of the empire's destruction. After Sapa Inca Huayna Capac caught smallpox and died, the Incan Empire was divided into a bloody civil war between brothers Atahualpa and Huáscar, as the two argued over who was the rightful claimant of the throne. When Atahualpa won, the Incan Empire was left weakened and fragile, right at the time the Spanish were exploring the Andes.

The Inca were polytheistic, believing in many different gods, however they believed that their emperor was the incarnate of Inti, the sun god.² The two most important deities to the Inca were Inti and Viracocha, the creator of the universe who supposedly created the Inca on an island in Lake Titicaca. The Inca were so devoted to their gods that they named themselves "Intip Churin", which translates to children of the sun. However, the Inca were also notorious for their use of human sacrifices, termed Capacocha. These sacrifices were taken out onto mountains all throughout the Andes and placed alive into burial tombs where they were left with items such as

² Bernabé, *History of the Inca Empire*.

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figurines, coca leaves, food, alcoholic beverages, and pottery. Mountain deities were worshiped because it was believed that they controlled things like rainfall, water flow and therefore, the abundance and fertility of crops.

The Inca utilized a federalist system and had no separate judiciary or codified laws, while also having a substantial bureaucracy and allowing equality for women to inherit property and own land.³ The Incan empire is contemporarily considered to be a god emperorship ruling over a functioning bureaucracy made of local governments and local elites. The Inca enforced their rule through random selection of troops, construction of Incan temples in newly conquered territory, and education of the youth in Inca technology and tradition.

The Inca were advanced in architecture, astronomy, mathematics, ceramics and medicine, performing successful skull surgeries.⁴ Interestingly, the Inca did not use a formal written language, instead using knotted strings called quipu to record numbers, literature, and history. The Inca were also incredibly advanced in agriculture, farming around seventy species of crops. The Inca used terrace farming to grow crops in hills and mountain sides, but also developed microclimates to test which crops would grow the best at which altitudes. The Inca also developed storehouses called Qollqas, which allowed for reliable storage of food in the high altitudes of the Andes. Perhaps the greatest achievement of the Inca civilization was their road network, twenty-five thousand miles of roads constructed in the 13th-16th centuries which was not only the largest infrastructure network in Pre-Columbian South America, but also allowed for rapid and easy transportation of troops, supplies, and information. These roads resulted in the construction of inns called tambos, where travelers and messengers could stay for a night and

³ Irene Silverblatt, *Moon, Sun, and Witches: Gender Ideologies and Class in Inca and Colonial Peru* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).

⁴ Susan A. Niles, *The Shape of Inca History: Narrative and Architecture in an Andean Empire* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999).

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have food and water. The Inca also built canals, diverted rivers, created sanitation systems, aqueducts and bridges; all without metal tools, a writing system, or work animals like horses.

The Spanish were indirectly responsible for bringing smallpox to South America, resulting in millions of deaths. Even though the Inca were numerically superior, the Spanish brought guns, horses and steel, giving them a technological advantage over the Inca. In addition, the Inca had no system of writing, no animals to ride or to assist in farming and construction, and no knowledge of iron or steel. Meanwhile native groups like the Huanca sided with the Spanish against their Incan overlords, stirring ethnic revolt within the nation. In this committee, the Inca will need to defend themselves against a technologically superior force, whilst dealing with a pandemic decimating their population and ethnic unrest in outer parts of the empire.

Historical Background: Spain

While the Inca have a difficult task ahead, so do the Spanish. The Spanish are trying to explore an unknown continent, facing hostile terrain like rainforests and high mountains, whilst fighting an enemy that outnumbers them over 500 to 1. The Spaniards also need to balance power between the conquistadors and the Spanish crown, who want to make sure that they will receive control of the territory after it is conquered. The conquistadors acted as the vanguards of the New World for the Spanish Empire and Portuguese Empire. They were professional warriors that used European tactics, firearms, and cavalry. They set sail from the shores of the Iberian peninsula to conquer territory, open trade routes, and progress the goal of spreading Catholicism. The conquistadors sailed beyond Europe to the Americas, Oceania, Africa, and Asia throughout the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, colonizing most of the world for Spain and Portugal.⁵

⁵ Niles, *The Shape of Inca History*.

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Catholicism also plays a major role, acting as both a calming and driving force for different delegates seeking to convert the Inca to follow God. Many of the Spanish entering the Incan Empire had the goal of converting the natives to their religious beliefs. The conquistadors also seek to take advantage of an ongoing civil war and flamed ethnic tensions within the empire, hoping to use these forces to their advantage.

The overseas expansion of the Spanish was first initiated under the royal authority of the Crown of Castille, the political entity that ruled the majority of the Iberian peninsula from 1230 to 1715.⁶ Beginning with the 1492 arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Caribbean, the Spanish Empire would expand across the Caribbean Islands, half of South America, most of Central America, and much of North America over the next three centuries. During the colonial period, it is estimated that 1.86 million Spaniards settled in the Americas.⁷ Furthermore, 3.5 million Spaniards immigrated during the post-colonial era from 1850 to 1950.⁸



After his father's death in 1479, Ferdinand II of Aragon unified the Kingdom of Castile, which took up the central and northern parts of the Iberian peninsula, with the Kingdom of

⁶ Bernabé, *History of the Inca Empire*

⁷ Philip Ainsworth Means, *Fall of the Inca Empire: and the Spanish Rule in Peru, 1531-1780* (New York: Gordian Press, 1964).

⁸ Means, *Fall of the Inca Empire*.

⁹ Niles, *The Shape of Inca History*.

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Aragon, which controlled the north-eastern part of the peninsula. This unification birthed the Kingdom of Spain that would soon lead the world in the conquest of colonies. The 1492 discovery of the New World ushered in this wave of colonization, and one that thrust Spain and their neighbor Portugal into an immense competition. The two kingdoms compromised in the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas, which gave Portugal all lands to be discovered east of a meridian line drawn through the Americas, and the Spanish all lands discovered west of the line.¹⁰

In the early 16th century, conquistador Francisco Pizarro set sail across the Atlantic and made their first contact with the Inca Empire in 1526 at Tumbes, the northernmost Inca stronghold along the coast.¹¹ By this time during the Age of Exploration, the goals of the Spanish were to colonize in the New World, thereby creating trade routes to Spain, as well as spread the ideas of Catholicism to the indigenous people they encountered. In 1529, Pizarro returned to Spain with his newfound discovery of the Inca, and was thus granted by the Queen of Spain the license to conquer Peru. Due to a civil war that erupted in the Inca empire at this time, Pizarro and his conquerors had a perfect opportunity to overthrow the Incan throne and declare it a Spanish colony.

When Pizarro and his soldiers landed in South America, they immediately took advantage of the opportunities given to them by the civil war and plague. However, the Spanish still had the odds stacked against them. The Incan people were conflicted about whether or not these strange beings that travelled to their land were gods or men. Atahualpa was worried that if they were runa quicachac (destroyers of people), they would devastate him and his empire. However, he also did not wish to experience the displeasure and anger of the gods if this was in fact them. The Spanish also needed to navigate a foreign and dangerous terrain. The Andes are

¹⁰ Means, *Fall of the Inca Empire*.

¹¹ Silverblatt, *Moon, Sun, and Witches*.

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the longest continental mountain range on Earth, with the average mountain standing over 13,000 feet tall. The Andes include massive deserts like the Atacama desert, tropical rainforests, freezing cold mountain passes, and altitudes that none of the Spanish are equipped for. The Spanish could not approach from the east because of the Amazon rainforest, the south because of the Mapuche and the dangerous waters of Tierra Del Fuego, and the west because of the Andes mountains, and as such were forced to march down from the north in Panama. In this committee, the Spanish will have to know how to use the weakened Incan Empire to their advantage, while also navigating an unknown, foreign land in their hopes of successful conquests and converting the native people.

Topic 1 - Imperialism, Smallpox, and Conflict of Religion:

The Inca Empire was the largest in Pre-Columbian South America, both in land and population.¹² Polytheism dominated Inca society, and although they believed in many different gods, they believed that their emperor was the incarnate of Inti, the sun god.¹³ The Inca were also employing a federalist system. They had no separate judiciary or codified laws. They were also surprisingly progressive for their time, as they allowed equality for women to own land and inherit property. The Inca were also advanced in many areas of science and mathematics, including astronomy, ceramics, medicine, and architecture. Despite all of this, their only form of language and record-keeping was from using knotted strings called quipu.

Unfortunately for the Inca, they had a lot on their plate at the time of the Spanish invasion. The civil war between brothers Atahualpa and Huáscar led to large-scale ethnic unrest, and smallpox, brought to the empire by the Spanish, proved to be deadly for the native people.

¹² Bernabé, *History of the Inca Empire*.

¹³ Bernabé, *History of the Inca Empire*.

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When Atahualpa won, the Incan Empire was left weakened and fragile, right at the time the Spanish were exploring the Andes. The Spanish brought ideas of Christianity into the lands of the Inca, with the hopes of spreading their beliefs to the new people they had encountered. However, for the Incas, the introduction of Christianity led to a conflict of religion between themselves and the newcomers, raising tensions in their homeland. The Inca also imposed their religion on conquered peoples, even if they allowed the continued worship of some gods provided they were given a lesser status to *Inti*. The Incas even imposed their own art across the empire as a way to visually impress exactly who was the ruling class. There were some benefits to Inca rule – a more regulated food supply, better roads and communications, the possibility of Inca military protection, and occasional state-sponsored feasts.¹⁴ However, this was not taken lightly by the Spanish. The wave of momentum that Spain, and nearly all of Europe, had in the quest for imperialism blindsided the Inca. Additionally, the Spanish had the advantage of guns, horses, and steel, despite being outnumbered by the Inca.

In addition, the Inca had no system of writing, no animals to ride or to assist in farming and construction, and no knowledge of iron or steel. Thus, the Inca will be forced to face a life-threatening pandemic that is decimating their population, as well as ethnic unrest in the empire, all while fighting the technologically dominant Spanish.

Topic 2 - Ethnic Unrest:

The death of Sapa Inca Huayna Capac resulted in the bloody civil war between brothers Atahualpa and Huáscar. Huáscar initiated the war because he saw himself as the rightful heir to the kingdom of all the Incas. Regardless of legitimacy, Atahualpa proved himself to be tactically

¹⁴ Bernabé, *History of the Inca Empire*.

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superior to his brother in warcraft and to the mighty armies of Cuzco, which their father had stationed in the north part of the empire during the military campaign.¹⁵ Despite this civil war coming to a near close, the empire was left weakened and fragile from these tumultuous political years. The years following the civil war also ended up including the arrival of Pizarro and the conquistadors, ready for exploration and invasion. The civil unrest that persisted in the empire after Atahualpa was declared victorious gave the incoming Spanish a major advantage over the Inca. The people were already divided, and when the Spanish arrived, some even joined their side, believing the “Inca overlords” to be too ruthless and that Atahualpa was undeserving of the throne.

Topic 3 - The Spanish Invasion of the Incan Empire:

While the Inca have a difficult task ahead, so do the Spanish. The Spanish are trying to explore an unknown continent, facing hostile terrain like rainforests and high mountains, whilst fighting an enemy that outnumbers them over 500 to 1. Additionally, the Incan people were questioning whether Pizarro and his men could be trusted, welcomed into the empire, or be seen as enemies. The Inca were also weary as to whether or not Pizarro and his men were gods or mortals. The technological advancements of the Spanish did however give them a major upper hand in controlling the Inca, and towards their eventual destruction. As the 1500s progressed, Pizarro and his men took multiple trips to and from the Incan empire, each time stirring civil unrest that already existed there and planting the seeds for the Spanish invasion. The first formal meeting between Pizarro and Atahualpa involved a few speeches, a drink together while they watched some Spanish horsemanship, and not much else. Both sides left planning to capture or

¹⁵ Bernabé, *History of the Inca Empire*.

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kill the other party at the first available opportunity. The very next day Pizarro, using the conveniently labyrinth-like architecture of the Inca town to his advantage, set his men in ambush to await Atahualpa's arrival in the main square. When the royal troop arrived, Pizarro fired his small cannons, and then his men, wearing armor, attacked on horseback. In the ensuing battle, where firearms were mismatched against spears, arrows, slings, and clubs, 7,000 Incas were killed against zero Spanish losses. Atahualpa was hit with a blow on the head and captured alive.¹⁶ Atahualpa remains the sole Incan figurehead blocking Pizarro and his men from a Spanish victory. At the same time, the Spanish had the advantage of having support of some other native groups like the Huanca, as they were not very fond of their Incan overlords. With different obstacles and different advantages, the Spanish have a long road ahead of them in their conquest of the Incan empire.

Topic 4 - Spanish Motive: *Conflict Between Missionaries and Conquistadors:*

Two major motives for Spanish imperialism in the New World is to spread Christianity and gain territory. These reasonings for expeditions come to a head in the Andes mountains, as the missionaries are focused on spreading their monotheistic ways into the indigenous people's polytheistic lifestyle. Ironically, when the Spanish first encountered the Inca, some natives greeted them as gods. The assumption by some Inca that the Spanish were gods also brought a new light onto the missionaries' success, as these Incans took what they heard as gospel, while others doubted their legitimacy. On the other hand, the conquistadors, like Pizarro, were sent to the New World in the conquest for land, in competition with other technologically advanced European powers. As the years of New World invasions went on, imperialism in a geographical

¹⁶ Means, *Fall of the Inca Empire*.

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sense became the starting point for expansion, and the religious undertones emerged afterwards. In perfecting their title, Spanish conquistadores ruthlessly exerted their claim over the native peoples of the Americas as they annihilated whole communities of Indians and attempted to coerce the survivors of the Spanish conquest to renounce their traditional religion and culture. In their place, the agents of Spain moved to impose their own system of social and political order over the lands and peoples of the Americas. Imperialism quickly became much more than a religious crusade. One major caveat that emerged in the conflicting values of conquistadors and missionaries was whether or not it was moral to treat the Inca how they were treating them. Pillaging towns and ruthlessly decimating their population became looked at from a more religious lens. Although some conquistadors did not see the two as the same, others did in fact bring in their religious morals onto the Incan soil and took them into account when conversing with the indigenous people. However, these conquistadors were far and few between the majority, who overlooked the missionaries' morality and pushed on with the violence.

Delegates, you will have the task of a lifetime over these next few days. Some of you will be the last vestiges of an ancient civilization, not realizing that your world will be forever changed when foreign foets step on your soil. Others will be symbols of Europe's increasing power in the world, as you voyage beyond the Straits of Gibraltar to this brave "New World"; exploring freezing mountain ranges, blistering deserts and mysterious rainforests. Will you fend off these invaders and protect your people, or will you fall to the unstoppable tide of guns, germs and steel? Will you discover gold and silver beyond your wildest dreams, or will you stay trapped in the Amazon or the Atacama desert for all eternity? It is up to you to decide whether

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the Inca continue their glory or are silenced for the rest of history. Welcome to the Inca committee.

Bloc Positions

Inca

Though divided internally, the majority of the Inca are attempting to stop the cultural and political significance of the conquistadors in their empire. Even further, the Inca are trying to defend their kingdom from the violent ways of these newcomers. They are interested in polytheism, and have some interests in trying to convert the incoming Spanish to their religious beliefs. Moreover, some Incans even go as far as suggesting the conquistadors are gods themselves. In the midst of a civil war, an internally wrecked Inca empire is grasping to stay on its feet as two rulers fight over who has the rightful seat at the throne. The weakened empire is also focused on coming out of this struggle while also dealing with a smallpox pandemic that is decimating its population. The disadvantages are high for the Inca, but they nonetheless are fighting for their survival from all sides in these trying times.

Spanish

The wave of imperialism that has hit Europe is in full force for the Spanish. They are motivated to find and colonize land in this mysterious “New World,” seemingly inhabited by under-developed communities like the Inca. The Spanish conquistadors have set out with royal orders to pillage and invade these lands, while Spanish missionaries are determined to convert the indigenous people to the ways of Catholicism. Thus, their interests vary from the spread of religion to conquering new land in the competition of exploration with other European nations

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like France and Portugal. The Spanish mostly have little to no intent of keeping the Incas around or protecting them. However, some missionaries question the morality of using violence against members of the Incan empire. The Spanish conquistadors have the advantage of invading the Inca in the midst of their civil war. Furthermore, the already weakened Incas are now susceptible to smallpox, a deadly disease that has been brought over by the Spanish.¹⁷ Alongside their technological advancements, the Spanish, despite being much smaller in size, have a large advantage over the Incan Empire in their quest for colonization and Christianity.

Questions to Consider:

Topic 1 - Imperialism, Smallpox and Conflict of Religion

- How might the Inca defend themselves against a technologically superior opponent?
- How could the Inca plan to protect their culture despite the incoming Spanish invasion?
- With smallpox wreaking havoc among the empire, how could the Inca approach this problem? Is it even worth it at all?
- How might the introduction of Christianity affect the Incan Empire in the long term?
- How do the polytheistic and native traditions of the Inca affect their relationship with the Spanish?

Topic 2 - Ethnic Unrest

- What effect does the civil war have on the Incan population, regardless of the Spanish invasion?
- What are Atahualpa's next steps for bringing the broken empire back to prosperity? How might these plans be squandered by conquistadors?

¹⁷ Niles, *The Shape of Inca History*.

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- How might Atahualpa approach Pizarro and the conquistadors? Should he greet them with arms wide open or with weapons drawn?

Topic 3 - The Spanish Invasion of the Incan Empire

- Should Pizarro and his men treat the Inca with respect at first, or should they pillage with no mercy? What are the repercussions of each approach?
- How might the conflicting goals of the Spanish missionaries and the Spanish conquistadors affect their trips into the Incan Empire?
- How could Pizarro utilize the weakened war-ravished empire to his advantage?
- Should the Spanish play up the role of “gods” to the Incans to promote their authority, or should they deny the Incan polytheism and push their agenda of Catholicism?
- How might competition with other imperialistic European countries affect the actions of Pizarro and his men?

Topic 4 - Spanish Motive: Conflict Between Missionaries and Conquistadors

- Which goal should be more paramount to the Spanish, religion or imperialism? How might external factors, like other European countries and Incan resistance, affect this?
- How might morality come into play for the Spanish conquistadors that promote violence against the native people.

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