

Background Guide



Beating the Barbarians: Mongolian Expansion in the 1200s

Topic A: Military Defense from Expanding Mongolians

Topic B: Increasing Conflict Along the Silk Road

Chair: Alyna Januarius

TAEMUN IX

December 8-9, 2023

Committee Background

With the rise of Gengis Khan (1162-1227, born Temüjin), there was great upheaval in Mongol society. Previously the Mongol Society consisted of disbanded groups of various competing interests who fought amongst each other. However Gengis Khan was able to outmaneuver them all and unite the tribes, creating a powerful singular Mongol entity. With the calling of a Kurultai (the Mongol equivalent of council) he consolidated power in Mongolia with him at the center allowing him to turn his attention to the borders of Mongolia. Through raids of the Western Xia (1205) and campaigns against the Jin (1211-1215) Mongol power and reach grew. The Mongol empire in this time had at the time had unconventional freedoms of religion and culture. Multiculturalism was encouraged and new conquered areas were able to retain their unique identities.

The Mongols themselves practiced Tengrism which placed an emphasis on the sky and this influenced their expansive nature as they wanted to conquer more land that fell under this holy sky. Many of the neighboring countries are worried about the increasing Mongol incursions. The strong militant focused culture combined with the fierce determination of the Mongol Warriors made them feared foes for anyone who crossed them.. Major neighbors include the Han Chinese Jin Dynasty (1115–1234) (also known as Jurchen Dynasty) and the Persian Khwarezmian Empire (1077 - 1231). The Mongols were technologically and culturally somewhat behind compared to these neighboring countries. They were largely nomadic and any permanent settlements they had were few and far between. This resulted in a largely negative perspective from their neighboring cultures as they were considered as backward. This often led to an underestimation of the Mongol strength which tended to later serve to the detriment of themselves.

Topic A: Military Defense from Expanding Mongolians

Background:

Under the military prowess of Genghis Khan, the Mongol army has been undefeated and eyeing more territory to conquer. Many of the nearby nations represent the unique cultures of the regions and there is a worry among them of an erosion of culture due to the Mongol despite Mongol guarantees of freedom of religion and culture. The Mongol's unique battle tactics and mentoring nature allow them to dominate other nations with previously thought as modern battle tactics. After a successful war with the Jin the Mongol Empire sits at its current peak and seems to not be slowing down.

Current Situation:

The threat of Mongol invasion looms and many of the nations are wondering how they can protect against them. Currently army organization and tactics seem to be failing and many around the world are looking for ways to beat the Mongol Army. The Mongols meanwhile after their war with the Jin Empire from 1211 to 1215 and are looking west at the Khwarezmian Empire. A caravan of merchants from the Mongols was recently massacred while traveling in the Khwarezmian empire was attacked by forces under Muhammad II (1169-1220) who was the leader of the Khwarezmian Empire, out of pride and confidence in their capabilities. Mongol ambassador's sent to avoid peace by Gengis Khan were additionally massacred by a local Governor, leading much anger with the Khan due to the high regard he placed of his ambassadors. The refusal of punishment for the Governor, additionally, made many in the Mongol court enraged and called for war against the Khwarezmian.

TAEMUN IX

Beating the Barbarians: Mongolian Expansion in the 1200s

Questions to Consider:

1. How can bordering nations protect against the Mongol armies' power?
2. How can tensions be reduced among both parties?
3. What agreement can be made between the nations that allows both sides to achieve what they want out of the conflict?



Topic B: Increasing Conflict Along the Silk Road

Background:

The Silk Road is a trade route from Western Europe to East Asia and is the main artery of these economies. Goods such as Silk and Tea from the East were traded for Gold and Wine from Europe. Many of the economies of the northern Eurasian continent were dependent on this exchange of goods and a disruption of this can lead to major issues. The Silk Road itself goes through mountain passes and passes by many different cultures and countries.

The Expansion of the Mongol Empire under Gengis Khan led to a reshaping of power along the Silk Road and due to victories with the Jurchen Dynasty by 1218 the Mongol Empire controlled most of the eastern portion of the Silk Road. The expansion has led to large amounts of instability in the region with a rapid change in power. This change has led to a feeling of worry among countries and a diversion of resources to deal with the Mongol threat. The focus on the Mongol threat led to less emphasis in protection of goods leading to rising crime.

Current Situation:

Banditry largely by Mongol and other Central Asian bandit groups is on the rise. Trade volume has consequently decreased and this is a massive issue as large portions of European and Asian economies depend on the trade between them both. Many are wondering how stability on the Silk Road can be preserved but still accounting for the Mongol threat. Additionally increasing tension between the Mongol's Khwarezmian Empire is leading to further worry about the stability of the Silk Road. Any more conflict, would cause even more banditry leading to an increase in the detriment to the economics of the area.

Questions to Consider:

1. What are some ways can stability in the Silk Road be preserved?
2. How can the Silk Road be protected from future conflicts in the Area?
3. How can the Mongols and Khwarezmian despite their conflict help protect the stability of the Silk Road despite their differences to protect their economies.



Bibliography:

Asia Society. "The Mongol Dynasty." *Asia Society*, asiasociety.org/education/mongol-dynasty.

Cartwright, Mark. "Mongol Empire." *World History Encyclopedia*, 11 Nov. 2019,

www.worldhistory.org/Mongol_Empire/.

Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Jin Dynasty." *Britannica*, Encyclopaedia Britannica,

www.britannica.com/topic/Jin-dynasty-China-Mongolia-1115-1234.

Krajick, Kevin. "Climate and Conquest: How Did Genghis Khan Rise?" *State of the Planet*,

Columbia Climate School, 13 May 2013,

news.climate.columbia.edu/2013/05/13/climate-and-conquest-how-did-genghis-khan-rise

National Geographic. "The Silk Road." *National Geographic*,

education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/silk-road/.

Scholarly Community Encyclopedia. "Mongol Conquest of Khwarezmia." *Scholarly Community*

[Encyclopedia, encyclopedia.pub/entry/34746](https://encyclopedia.encyclopedia.pub/entry/34746).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. "About the Silk Roads."

UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,

en.unesco.org/silkroad/about-silk-roads.