

**The European International Model United Nations  
2018**

**Historical Crisis Council**



**The Crisis of the Third Century**



## Topic Description

Salvete Civitates! The year is 235 CE, and our Emperor, Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander Augustus, has been assassinated. His manhood he sold to his mother when he heeded her advice more than his loyal courtiers, an act unfitting of Roman character! Instead of bringing upon the Barbarian tribes the mercy of Rome, he chose to shower them in gold.

Now we stand at a crossroads. The new Emperors hold on power is yet uncertain. More than this immediate concern, with the strong dynastic Emperors of old gone, the Roman state is in dire need of a clearer system of succession if it is to prevent continued grievances between citizens, or worse, outright civil war!

While the generals and senators debate, the Empire is left disorganised. Now the devious Sassanid snake ever plots against our rule in the Eastern provinces, as barbarian hordes knock on our borders in the North.

What's more, the expansion in power and daring of our Barbarian adversaries has meant that since the death of our glorious Emperor Traianus in 117, the Empire has been increasingly on the defensive. The state coffers continue to dry up through a lack of loot, and an abundance of military expenses to ward off the uncivilised rabble.

To make matters worse, the disciples of the false prophet Jesus Christ grow ever greater in number, and as their adherents increase, so does their boldness in challenging our sovereign gods!

Beyond these immediate problems, trade is crumbling, ancient systems of administration are growing increasingly outdated, and as the old elites attempt to cling onto power it is clear that new social groups will attempt to claim their right to rule.

Our Empire is on the verge of a great crisis. Dark clouds emerge from within and outside, will the gods continue to favour our role as the guardian of civilisation, or does this gathering storm spell the beginning of the end? The people of Rome are in need of strong leadership and thorough reform. Whoever will attempt to meet the many challenges will be confronted with severe opposition from jealous adversaries and new threats on all sides. But we are Romans, the sons of Aeneas, and we will prove victorious in this new Age. Ave!

## Welcome Letter

Dear delegates,

On behalf of the crisis staff, welcome to the Historical Crisis Council of TEIMUN 2018! Before you begin your dive into the exciting historical setting by doing research, making preparations and drafting a priority assassination list, we would like to provide you with an overview of the council, some historical background and some words of encouragement which you might find helpful as you proceed.

You will be participating in a conference which is blessed to have celebrated its 30th anniversary last year. That means we have a long history of exhilarating (and bedizening) conferences to look back on. While the Historical Crisis Council is a relatively new addition, it has developed a unique mix of teaching delegates how to act under pressure in a historical geopolitical setting while retaining a good bit of fun. It's that balance that makes it a perfect fit for TEIMUN. We pay particular homage to this year's theme "unity or fragmentation" by choosing the Crisis of the Third Century as our topic. Quintessentially Roman, it is going to be a spectacle full of intrigue, backstabbing, general debauchery, warfare, negotiating and grand history-making, where you as delegate will be playing the leading role.

Your choices might prevent Christianity from ever rising, save the Roman Empire from its penultimate collapse or stop the World Wars from ever happening (who knows?). We cannot predict the future, we can only see it unfold. All of this would have been an incredible responsibility... if it weren't largely a glorified game of cosplay. We hope to see some intensive role-playing but be sure to have fun as well! Collectively we can make this the experience surpassing any hopes we might have.

This year promises to be an entirely new challenge for delegates familiar with the former Historical Crisis Councils of TEIMUN since the theme period will be much further back in time and thus far more unrecognisable from our own world. That also levels the playing field for newcomers. Again, it is up to yourself to make the most of it by in-depth preparations and totally adopting your personage. But above all, enjoy the unique atmosphere and collection of people! As you are preparing for the conference, please don't hesitate to reach out to us with any questions or concerns.

Virtus et Fortitudo!

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## Historical Background

Ever since Augustus ascended the throne in 27 BCE and ended a long period of Roman civil strife and crisis, the Roman Emperors have reigned as *Primus inter pares*, "first amongst equals" over the largest Empire of the classical period. Roman hegemonic dominance and prosperity during the following two centuries was famously dubbed the *Pax Romana*. Cities flourished, nourishing the ever-expanding trade network safeguarded by Rome's unmatched legions and fleets.<sup>1</sup> Population boomed, new territories were steadily acquired and a lack of powerful neighbours barring a dormant Persia left external opposition at a minimum.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, Rome had to deal with numerous Barbarian invasions, famines, civil wars and plagues throughout the period. Many of these crises occurred during transition periods, when the deceased Emperor had failed to securely appoint a popular and able heir and a new dynasty was eventually proclaimed following a short period of turmoil. The year of the four Emperors in 68 CE was the most famous of these. Crucially though, all of them were overcome relatively quickly and left little long-term damage. It seemed as if the Empire was structurally invincible.

However, the death of Emperor Marcus Aurelius in 180 CE marked a turning point. A series of unstable successions, incompetent rulers and financial disasters led bear the uncomfortable truth: lacking strong and influential Emperors, the Empire was left at the mercy of powerful parties with vested interests. The Praetorian Guard, the army and the Senate all conspired to routinely dispose of Emperors fallen out of favour. This political instability became engaged in a negative feedback loop with the economy and social harmony. The *Pax Romana* was over, its remarkable longevity largely due to the full purses of Emperors and the luck of usually competent heirs. Now the structural deficits of an undefined succession system started to slowly rot away at the pillars of central authority.<sup>3</sup>

The third century was thus marked by a Roman Empire increasingly structurally unable to deal with several problems. With Emperors largely focused on preserving their positions of power rather than addressing endemic issues, trust in Imperial legitimacy slowly eroded across the far away provinces. Civil strife became more frequent, necessitating ever larger numbers of troops while the health of the economy was moving in the exact opposite direction. Adding to this already precarious internal situation, enemies beyond the frontiers began to increase in strength and, equally, in ambition. Yet Rome is still the unchallenged master of the Mediterranean and enough true Romans remain willing to ensure it will continue to be so, but time is sparse.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://money.visualcapitalist.com/currency-and-the-collapse-of-the-roman-empire/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/thirdcenturycrisis\\_article\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/thirdcenturycrisis_article_01.shtml)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/thirdcenturycrisis\\_article\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/thirdcenturycrisis_article_01.shtml)

Thus is the state of the Roman Empire on the 20th of March 235 CE, the day after an assassination that might forever change the very root and core of its institutions and citizens and herald the transition between classical and late antiquity.<sup>4</sup>

## The state of the Roman Empire in 235 CE

### Politics

The Roman administration of territory, people and funds can largely be demarcated into two legal areas: Imperial and Senatorial provinces. Imperial provinces were ruled by a Legatus Augusti pro praetore (envoy of the Emperor), chosen by the Emperor. Most of these provinces were located in tumultuous areas which required a large military presence. Senatorial Provinces were ruled by a Proconsul elected by the Senate. Both of these governors held almost absolute political and military power over their subjects and served as generals besides their administrative role. The sheer size of the Empire had always necessitated a delegated system of administration to ensure effective and rapid decision making and the mobilisation of troops and resources. Around the 3rd century however, as the power of the Emperor eroded and threats on the frontiers mounted, these local governors became increasingly more important for Roman administration and got more involved with the question of Imperial succession. Imperial overstretch co-existing with powerful local rulers was a strong deficiency in the Roman system.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>4</sup> Brown, P, *The World of Late Antiquity*, London 1971, p. 22.

<sup>5</sup> [Clifford Ando](#), "The Administration of the Provinces," in *A Companion to the Roman Empire* (Blackwell, 2010),

<sup>6</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman\\_province#/media/File:RomanEmpire\\_117.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_province#/media/File:RomanEmpire_117.svg)

As mentioned above, the main internal political challenge to the Roman Empire's continued stability was its inability to formulate a clear succession system. Autocracies are generally marked by violent periods of power transition, as the promise of absolute control is tempting and institutions to ensure democratic oversight and control cannot exist alongside absolute monarchy. In the absence of a powerful individual, this can lead to continued power struggles.<sup>7</sup>

Beyond the institutional issue of succession, there is the problem of a shifting model of the concentration of power. From the early days of the Empire, it had been the Emperor who held supreme authority and delegated that authority when necessary. While he traditionally relied heavily on military and senatorial support, it was rarely an overriding factor. The military usually stood by the Emperor through custom, respect and steady salary. Emperor Septimus Severus (193-211 CE) initiated a new set of policies in order to increase the size and loyalty of the military.<sup>8</sup> This was largely a response to increased external threats. Doing so, he raised a soldier's salary from 300 to 500 denarii annually and recruited additional legions. He paid for these extra costs by debasing the currency, a crucial issue which we will address in more detail below. While these measures ensured a more stable frontier, they steadily increased the dependency of Emperors on the military as successive rulers paid higher tributes to their forces to ensure their loyalty. This drained the state coffers, reduced the authority of the Emperor and made the position more open to intrigue and military favouritism.<sup>9</sup>

## Economy

The Roman Imperial economy was, alongside ancient China, the most complex of the pre-industrial world. The taxation of large scale land holders utilising poorer free men and slaves, urban proto-manufacturing and long-distance trade were the main sources of state revenue. More than half of these revenues went to military upkeep, which again ensured economic activity.<sup>10</sup>

By modern standards however, the Roman economy was structurally deficient from its inception. In order to deal with a massive population and a complicated system of urbanisation and trade, the Romans developed an intricate and effective logistical and administrative system. Standardised legal codes ensured stable property rights and encouraged growth while a basic banking system with credit and interest existed and standardised coinage enabled extensive economic activity.<sup>11</sup> The system, however, was highly dependent on the political stability of the Empire. Warfare disrupted mining operations, plundered stocks of coin and destroyed economic confidence. The for its time gigantic city of Rome needed continuous shipments of cereals from Carthage and Egypt to feed the population. Emperors who failed to do so could count on a lot of civil unrest. Since no central bank existed, and the Emperor regularly debased the currency to

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/thirdcenturycrisis\\_article\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/thirdcenturycrisis_article_01.shtml)

<sup>8</sup> Flichy, Thomas. *Financial crises and renewal of empires*.

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.ancient.eu/Crisis\\_of\\_the\\_Third\\_Century/](https://www.ancient.eu/Crisis_of_the_Third_Century/)

<sup>10</sup> <http://money.visualcapitalist.com/currency-and-the-collapse-of-the-roman-empire/>

<sup>11</sup> [Jean Andreau](#), *Banking and Business in the Roman World* (Cambridge University Press, 1999)

fund his own expenses (especially towards the 3rd century) economic crises were hard to manage and short-term priorities often prevailed over long term policy.<sup>12</sup>

The 3rd century witnessed a rapid decline in the health of the economy. No consensus about its exact causes prevail, but a general decline in economic activity as a result of political turbulence is undisputed. Inflation skyrocketed as coins were debased and minted to fund the military and ensure their loyalty to the Emperor.<sup>13</sup> The army needed exponentially larger funds while the economy declined, making their salaries less useful in the long run and decreasing their loyalty to their employers.<sup>14</sup>

To make matters worse, income inequality increased as the middle class eroded, and the rich became richer, long distance trade in the Empire and with its neighbours was severely disrupted and frequent outbreaks of plague reduced population levels. One such pandemic at the end of the 2nd century killed up to 30 percent of the entire Roman population.<sup>15</sup> As a result of these processes, de-urbanisation and lower productivity became the new trend. Essentially, the Roman economy was starting to decentralise exactly at a time when it needed huge central oversight of finances as it was being threatened from within and without.<sup>16</sup>

## **Military**

The Roman military had traditionally been both tactically and strategically unmatched by its neighbours. This was largely due to the emphasis on effective organisation, logistics and military discipline. The army was split between mobile professional citizen infantry formations (legions) and less prestigious, local support formations recruited amongst the non-citizen population (auxiliaries). The main driver for volunteer application to the army before 212 CE was that service provided pay and Roman citizenship.<sup>17</sup> The latter could ensure a prosperous and privileged future for veterans and their families. However, as always, economic troubles would affect the system.

In 212 CE, Emperor Caracalla issued the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, in which he granted Roman citizenship to all free inhabitants of the Empire.<sup>18</sup> His aim was to increase the number of taxable individuals, but it inadvertently led to a decrease in the exclusive appeal of military service. Simultaneously, lower effective pay as a result of hyperinflation reduced soldiers to a subsistence level existence. These developments led to a trend of gradually more forced conscription, the inclusion of non-citizen Barbarians into the armed forces and a decrease in the overall quality of the military.<sup>19</sup> Simultaneously, the traditional professional core of the army had begun to change. Patrician Senators usually held the highest positions. The 3rd century saw a shift away from

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<sup>12</sup> Harris, "The Nature of Roman Money," in *The Monetary Systems of the Greeks and Romans*

<sup>13</sup> Flichy, Thomas. *Financial crises and renewal of empires*.

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.ancient.eu/Crisis\\_of\\_the\\_Third\\_Century/](https://www.ancient.eu/Crisis_of_the_Third_Century/)

<sup>15</sup> D. Ch. Stathakopoulos *Famine and Pestilence in the late Roman and early Byzantine Empire* (2007) 95

<sup>16</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20060717182740/http://isthmia.osu.edu/teg/50501/4.htm>

<sup>17</sup> Goldsworthy, Adrian (2003). *Complete Roman Army*

<sup>18</sup> The Roman Law Library *Constitutio Antoniniana de Civitate*

<sup>19</sup> Jones, A.H.M. (1964). *Later Roman Empire*.



traditional Italian leadership and towards professional military commanders and members of the knights (equites). While this usually ensured more able and experienced commanders and administrators, it also concentrated military power into the hands of regional, ambitious leaders and tied their troops loyalty to those men. Thus, the military was also the subject of decentralisation and fragmentation.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, Rome's enemies became stronger, and were in some cases even effective in adopting Roman tactics and equipment. Persia especially was sometimes able to best the Empire on the field, mostly due to its superior cavalry arm.<sup>21</sup> However, as we begin our crisis in 235 CE, Rome still maintains the largest and most able army in the known world with over 400,000 men strong, even if it is constantly engaged and overstretched.<sup>22</sup>

## Religion

Religion was an integral part of both daily life and high-political administration in ancient Rome. The Roman Pantheon supplied moral reflection, inspiration and purpose, with such a wide range of different gods encouraging a sense of Pluralism and intercultural exchanges (Roman territorial expansion often caused local gods to be incorporated into the pantheon, and vice versa) One of the most central aspects of religious worship was the principle of sacrifice. If they expected to be socially respected, every citizen, rich and poor, was expected to sacrifice goods, services or animals in proportion to their own wealth to the Gods, and to the Emperor. The latter was a sort of test of continuous loyalty and ensured that the Imperial office was not only constitutionally, but socially legitimised. Traditionally, the messianistic emperors were identified with divine authority (auctoritas) making their office divinely approved and constitutional. Deceased honourable Emperors would become a divinity (divus) through an act of apotheosis. This Imperial cult had the same high standing as Rome's official deities, which were essential to Rome's survival. Therefore, any disrespect to the Imperial cult was seen as treasonous. Alexander Severus' cousin is a good example of how an eastern emperor took his own god, Elagabalus, a Syrian sun god, and named it the supreme god of the Roman Deities. The cult of the sun already existed in republican times but started to play a larger role in the third century. The supreme god was called Sol Invictus; Unconquerable Sun. Subsequently Alexander Severus neglected his role as pontifex maximus (high priest of the Roman Pantheon). This contributed to the motivations of the Senate and the military, under the pretext of the salvation of Rome, to assassinate their 18-year old emperor subjected to the fullest indignities of *damnatio memoriae* (damnation of memory after death). The third century was a mix of pious emperors and, in Roman terms, blasphemous ones.<sup>23</sup>

Monotheists were seen as being irrational denialists of the Roman Pantheon. Judaism was largely exempted from this contempt due to their, in Rome's eyes, unthreatening nature as a result of non-existent or at least unsystematic conversion policies. The first Christian branches were seen as Judaic sub-sects and were therefore sometimes tolerated. However, intermittent persecutions occurred because this new occult faith became to be a perceived as a threat to Rome as its

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<sup>20</sup> Goldsworthy, Adrian (2003). *Complete Roman Army*

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.ancient.eu/article/1145/enemies-of-rome-in-the-3rd-century-ce/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20060717182740/http://isthmia.osu.edu/teg/50501/4.htm>

<sup>23</sup> R. L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (Yale University Press, 2003)

converts grew. Misconceptions of the people were also factors leading to persecution. Christians were charged to be cannibalists and committers of incest because they ate and drank the body and blood of Christ (Communion) and called each other brothers and sisters. When this led to public outrage, governors charged with the task of keeping their provinces *pacata atque quieta* (settled and orderly) tried to keep the Christians down. Several Emperors persecuted the Christians, an example being Nero who started a conflagration in the Christian part of Rome. The prosecution of Christians was a costly affair, in already declining times of the economy. Despite, or perhaps because of the prosecution of Christians in the Roman Empire, the faith continued to grow. With the precipice of economic decay and social unrest, the clarity of having a single god and the promise of universal salvation for all will prove to become increasingly tempting. In 235 CE, Christianity is still a minor religion, but it appears to be growing while the Roman state power wanes.<sup>24</sup>

## Culture

Life in the Roman Empire revolved around its capital, Rome. It was the pinnacle of society. Rome contained theaters, gymnasia, and many taverns, baths, and brothels, but also the illustrious Colosseum and Pantheon. The majority of the Roman populace, however, lived in the countryside in small villages. Latin has always remained the most important popular language, but from the 2nd century BCE Greek culture gained increasingly more influence, especially amongst educated elites. This was due to the fact that most households got their chefs, decorators, secretaries, doctors, and hairdressers from the Greek speaking parts of the Roman Empire. This led to some Roman writers calling Latin a deformed version of Greek. In law and governance Latin remained, nonetheless, untouchable.<sup>25</sup>

Roman life was divided in social classes, but one was often able to move up (or down) on the social ladder. There were a couple of factors indicating your class. These were:

- Ancestry (patrician or plebeian)
- Census rank (e.g. senatorial or equestrian)
- The *cursus honorum* ('the course of offices' or the usual career path in government) and your position in it
- Citizenship (ranging from Roman citizens to slaves)<sup>26</sup>

The Roman society was very patriarchal. The *pater familias* (patriarch of the family) held monopoly legal powers and jurisdiction over his entire family. Roman ethics were inspired by numerous (mostly Greek) strands of philosophy, of which Stoicism was the most popular. Communalism, modesty, personal discipline and restraint as well as strength were highly valued traits. However, many Romans view the current era as detrimental to the moral integrity of the Roman code of ethics. Corruption, lack of vision and personal interests trumping the common good are increasingly widespread phenomena. More than any kind of spiritual decay of society,

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<sup>24</sup> R. L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (Yale University Press, 2003)

<sup>25</sup> Janet Huskinson, *Experiencing Rome: Culture, Identity and Power in the Roman Empire* (Routledge, 2000)

<sup>26</sup> Koenraad Verboven. (2007). The Associative Empire. *Athenaeum* 95, p. 861.

these developments are largely a result of the decreasing health of the political and economic system.<sup>27</sup>

## The Crisis of the Third Century begins

As mentioned above, the Roman Empire had entered the 3rd century with a slowly decentralising government, weakening economy, increasingly ambitious rivals and widespread social unrest. The rusty pillars of tradition and a lack of ambitious reformers had prevented any serious attempt at addressing these issues, and yet the Giant of the Mediterranean sleepwalked on as it had done for the past 500 years. While Emperors dying of natural circumstances had been rare since Marcus Aurelius in 180 CE, and they succeeded each other rapidly without being able to leave a powerful impact, the transition of power had never been so contested that it caused full scale crisis. Then came the final push.

In 235 CE, Emperor Alexander Severus had just returned from a campaign against the resurgent Persian empire under the Sassanid dynasty. His mother and grandmother were heavily involved in his reign from the onset, leaving Alexander to be little more than a puppet for their personal interests. The military saw this as a breach of Roman virtues and gradually lost respect for their Emperor. When an Allemani invasion across the Danube prompted Alexander, through his mother's advice, to pay-off the Barbarians rather than face them in battle, this proved to be the final straw. A conspiracy amongst his officers led to the assassination of the Emperor. The Severan dynasty had come to an end.<sup>28</sup> The ringleader of the conspiracy, a lowborn Thracian by the name of Maximinus Thrax was proclaimed Emperor by the troops, followed with little enthusiasm by the Senate, who hold him in contempt for his status but realise that the military has finally become aware of its massive political power.<sup>29</sup> The Empire is in chaos and the new Emperor is an unpopular usurper. As delegates representing various notable Roman men and women, as well as outsiders, you will be tasked with navigating the gathering storm.

## The Historical Crisis Council

In light of all the historical background, one question has remained unanswered: "Where do I come in?" The Historical Crisis Council serves as a miniature simulation of the conflict at hand. Starting on 20th March 235 CE, delegates will take on the role of a variety of historical characters, each with their own ambitions, resources, allegiances and persona. These characters will take both individual and collective action to gain the upper hand throughout the historic period, militarily and diplomatically. But

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<sup>27</sup> Carlin A. Barton. (1993). *The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans: The Gladiator and the Monster*, pp. 176–177. Princeton University Press.

<sup>28</sup> [https://www.ancient.eu/Crisis\\_of\\_the\\_Third\\_Century/](https://www.ancient.eu/Crisis_of_the_Third_Century/)

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/thirdcenturycrisis\\_article\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/thirdcenturycrisis_article_01.shtml)

beware, just like in real life, these characters are mere humans, and are thus both fallible and mortal. The Council thus transforms into a game of wit, intellect and creativity as delegates navigate the complex landscape of the Roman world in all its madness and glory.

There are two main ways in which an individual can take action. Firstly, much like in standard Model UN, a delegate can interact with his or her fellow delegates through speeches, notes or informal talks. The council will for the most part be kept in 'unmoderated caucus', meaning there is limited protocol in regard to interaction, but there will be occasional Senate sessions and council wide formal caucuses during important events. While words are not always as effective as concrete actions, delegates should be aware of their potential to steer the course of debate, make themselves known and establish powerful alliances.

Secondly, and far more practically effective, a delegate can make use of 'directives'. These are decisions and proposed actions taken by the character or a group of characters that have a tangible impact on the situation at hand. Beware; the backroom is well informed about historical possibilities as well as general requirements for success and will respond to directives fairly. A directive tasking a science team to develop nuclear weapons will leave you with empty hands and puzzled relatives. However: we encourage delegates to stretch the realms of possibility and come up with creative, future oriented solutions. Furthermore, the devil is in the details. A directive to send a gift to that Senator you want to bribe without specifying the amount of money will have the backroom come up with all kinds of creative ways to bankrupt you not barring selling your own children.

Depending on the character, certain allegiances and power-dynamics exist. For example, the Roman Emperor has certain de jure powers over his subjects (inasmuch as those subjects remain loyal), and members of the Senate, Military or Praetorian guard all have their respective shared interests. Thus, delegates will find themselves in natural cooperation with some and natural competition with others. This can manifest itself in the form of collective directives (sent on behalf of the Senate, for example), submission to commands and military orders, and a great deal of snide pandering and subtle vying for influence. As in reality, however, individuals retain their radical free will, and are thus free to submit to or defy their masters as they see fit (and suffer the inevitable consequences).<sup>30</sup>

## **Currency and Armies**

While it is important to remember that your own research into the history of the period, your character's strengths and weaknesses and the general limitations and possibilities of the time, but most importantly creativity are crucial in gaining the upper hand during the crisis (especially through potent directives), we will use some standardized systems to make life easier for delegates (and prevent unnecessary requests for information) Especially considering the lack of

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<sup>30</sup> This section borrows heavily from the 2016 HCC Background Paper, since it involves standard HCC mechanics. <http://teimun.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/TEIMUNHistoricalCrisisBP-1.pdf>

accurate sources for the time period, currency devaluation, etc., we have sacrificed some historical authenticity for efficiency. Remember, these are simply benchmarks. There are different ways to gain and spend money and to use your armies, and we encourage creative experimentation. But for general reference, the following points:

The Roman Empire had a number of different coins in circulation. We will use the most commonly distributed one, the Denarius, as a single currency for use by Roman and non-Roman characters (Our world is basically the Eurozone, but with more death) A Denarius roughly translates to 2 modern euros. The annual wage of a worker in the Roman Empire was 300 Denarii, enough to live a basic life. Average soldiers earned twice as much. The richest man in all of Roman history was Crassus. He held a total of 50 million Denarii in his treasury. In between these two extremes, mid-end officials could expect to earn around 10,000 Denarius annually. The total Gross Domestic Product of the Roman Empire around 235 CE was valued at 5 billion Denarii. Since Rome was a largely autarkic economy with little economic liquidity, only 5% of that GDP, so 250 million Denarii, entered the state coffers as annual income. The state spent most its income on military expenses.

Cost of a **legion** of 5000 men = **2,5 million Denarii**

Cost of an **Auxiliary legion** of 5000 men = **2 million Denarii**

Cost of a **Praetorian Guard legion** of 5000 men = **5 million Denarii**

Cost of an **Artillery cohort** = **1 million Denarii**

Cost of a **Fleet** of 50 Ships and 5000 men = **2 million Denarii**

The Roman army in 235 CE was made up of 400,000 men of which around 160,000 were in 32 Legions of 5000 men and 240,000 were in 48 Auxiliary Legions of 5000 men. Then there was the Praetorian Guard of 15,000 men in 3 legions of 5000 men. 40,000 more Marines and 400 ships in 8 fleets of 50 ships each made up the navy. The total military size was thus 455,000 and the cost around 200 million Denarii annually.

The cost of these formations combined with your treasury information in your bio's will hopefully give you an idea of your effective spending power. **For efficiency, the backroom will keep track of a single disposable treasury for each character. Raising a legion for example, will cause a one-time reduction of 2,5 million Denarii from your treasury while building a mine, raising taxes, or plundering a city for example, will give you a one-time addition to your treasury. There is no upkeep, income or expenditure system. You may request information about your current treasury and troop numbers at any time through a directive. Also: the starting legions/Persian army/Barbarian soldiers are maintained by the state. If you choose to declare independence however, you will have to find ways to pay for your troops yourself...**

In terms of military strength, this again is influenced heavily not just by the base quality difference, but by certain variables such as morale, equipment, special troops, leadership etc which is added to their base strength at the discretion of the chairs, based on the approved

directives and general positions of delegates. Only the Praetorian Prefect or the Emperor can raise Praetorian Legions.

A **Legion** = 5000 men. (4800 infantry + 200 cavalry)

-Legions are great heavy frontline units, and can construct infrastructure and fortifications, but they lack support units. Great for sustained mobile operations.

An **Auxiliary Legion** = 5000 men (3000 infantry + 2000 cavalry)

-Auxiliaries are great support units, but they lack heavy frontline units. Great for garrisoning, border protection or supporting legions.

A **Praetorian Legion** = 5000 men (4500 infantry + 500 cavalry)

-Praetorians are elite heavy frontline formation with a decent amount of support. Great for concentrated power projection.

An **Artillery cohort** = 10 ballistae and 10 catapultae

-Artillery cohorts significantly decrease the duration and casualties of mounting a siege

A **Fleet** = 50 ships and 5000 marines

-Fleets can transport Legions, as well as attack coastal positions

A balance between offensive and support formations will ensure the best all-round army composition.

## Delegate Roles

Most delegates will enter the crisis as notable Roman individuals, as the crisis revolves around the struggles of that central Empire. Each will be granted a profile with unique abilities and resources, as well as membership of specific classes to reflect the social environment of the time. However, the agency of the delegates will play the major role. While you can mobilise useful pre-established networks you may have with certain other delegates, based on class, family or position, you do not have to do so, granted you are able to justify an alternative. Additionally, the outside world plays a prominent role in the crisis and delegates can expect to find themselves having to confront Barbarians and Persians. Some might even find themselves in their very sandals... Lastly, beyond the publicly known class distinctions, some characters might have secret ties with other characters. It is up to you to find them out amongst yourselves.

## Romans

The Romans are at their most divided place in recent memory. The new Emperor lacks popular legitimacy, the economy is collapsing, and enemies knock on the Empire's gates. The times to come will be the greatest test for the survival of this great realm in many generations. Will it overcome the challenge and reform with renewed vigour, or disintegrate? The Roman cabinet is divided in a number of classes:

### The Imperial Retinue

Made up of Emperor Maximinus Thrax, his family and the members of his court. The Emperor is the absolute ruler of the Roman Empire and holds complete final authority over all matters of government. The new Imperial Retinue is remarkable, in that it serves the first Emperor of

Peregrini origin. The Senate has officially recognised him, but reluctantly, and regards him as a barbarian. His position is as of yet highly unstable. <sup>31</sup>

- Maximinus Thrax (Emperor)
- Aspasius (Private Secretary to the Emperor)
- Galenus (Private Physician to the Emperor)

### The Senate

The Senate is the upper class of Rome, made up mostly of traditional influential Italian Roman families (patrician or plebeian) Some of those families trace their ancestry to the earliest days of the Republic. Senators traditionally held all the highest offices of government. In recent decades, the Senate has been gradually side-lined by non-traditional individuals in the Equestrian order and the Military in filling governing positions. The Emperor and the Praetorian guard have also usurped most of its legal competences. It has become a largely ceremonial organ but is still made up of powerful (especially, wealthy) families and administrators who receive excellent educations, even if their positions are generally based on networks and not on merit.

- Pupienus (Urban Prefect of Rome. Senator)
- Balbinus (Consul. Proconsul of Asia)
- Valerianus (Princeps Senatus. Proconsul of Baetica)
- Capellianus (Legatus Augusti of Mauretania Caesariensis)
- Trajanus Decius (Consul. Proconsul of Hispania Tarraconensis)
- Gallienus (Legatus Legionis of Legio XV Apollinaris. Senator)
- Gordianus (Proconsul of Africa Proconsularis. Senator)
- Julia Mamaea (Ex Empress Dowager)

### The Equestrians

The Equestrians are the middle class of Rome, made up of mostly non-Italian Roman families. Equestrians traditionally held many of the military and fiscal positions in the day to day executives such as legion commanders and as secretaries to governors. The Equestrian order is a growing power in replacing the highest offices traditionally held by the Senate. While legal barriers still remain, some of its more ambitious members are starting to change the normative trend. Most of them have achieved their positions through merit instead of networks such as the Senators, since they've had to prove themselves in their careers.

- Timesitheus (Praetorian Prefect)
- Philippus Arabs (Praetorian Trecenarius)
- Priscus (Legatus Augusti of Syria)
- Odaenathus (Ras of Palmyra. Senator of Rome)
- Zenobia (Queen of Palmyra)
- Marcus Polianus (Merchant)

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<sup>31</sup> Southern, P., *The Roman Empire from Severus to Constantine*, Routledge, 2001

-Postumus (Legatus Augusti of Germania Inferior and Germania Superior)

### The Peregrini

The Peregrini are the lower class of Rome. In 212 Emperor Caracalla issued the *Constitutio Antoniniana* in which all inhabitants of the Empire became citizens, effectively most provincial and tribal people. While their legal status is thus essentially the same as the Equestrians and Senators, they are regarded as low birthers at best, Barbarians at worst. The traditional Roman elites view them with disdain for not having earned their citizenship the hard way through service or marriage, and fear many of them aren't solidly Romanised. However, the edict has also opened up military and administrative careers for great talents. They are starting to gain great influence in both those sectors, their respect usually gained on merit exclusively, not status.

-Aurelianus (Legatus Augusti of Raetia, Noricum and Pannonia Superior)

-Claudius (Legatus Augusti of Pannonia Inferior and Moesia Superior)

-Cobledulitauus (Lawyer)

-Plotinus (All-Seer. Philosopher)

-Castor (Criminal Godfather)

### **Barbarians**

Relations between Rome and the northern tribesmen had never been stable, nor were they continually hostile. Rome always had the upper hand in diplomacy and warfare and also cleverly promoted the elite groups among the Barbarians in order to 'buy' loyalty. However, Rome became its own biggest enemy and the Barbarians were happy to exploit that. Carpians, Goths, Vandals, and Alamanni made great use of the current state of the Roman army by constantly raiding the outer provinces of the Roman Empire. However, some of them had to do so due to climate changes. Rising sea levels required some tribes to move in order to find food and survive. Their power grew when the distinct federations started slowly to work more together, making the Romans nervous for their unprotected cities.<sup>32</sup>

-Cniva (Gothic Warband Chief)

### **Persians**

The Persians were also restless but for other reasons. Ardashir I started his attack against the Romans in 230 in Rome's held Northern Mesopotamia. His goal was to restore the ancient Persian empire of the Achaemenids to its former glory. Unfortunately for him, he was unable to succeed. However, the murder of emperor Severus Alexander leaves behind a divided and weakened Rome, leaving options open.

-Shapur I (Shah of Persia)

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<sup>32</sup> *The Roman Empire and its Germanic Peoples* by H Wolfram, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997)



Beyond these worldly factions, delegates should not fail to respect the Gods for their ability to incur the wrath and mercy upon the Mediterranean region. The natural world will not pause its relentless power as Empires clash.

## **Resolving the Crisis**

There is more to historical crisis than the frantic unravelling or build-up of schemes. Each topic represents a crucible period in human history in which the stakes were immense, and the eventual outcome shaped political, economic and social customs for years to come. Hence, the chairs are not just looking for bloodbath conquest and cunning manoeuvres behind the directive scrolls, but also the way in which critical historical issues can be tackled, in which human agency can open up different paths, will be a vital part of the discussion. Just like QARMAs / Questions a Resolution Must Answer in other committees, delegates should try to answer these guiding issues, as the ongoing crisis progresses with each day. While the chairs encourage creative, and by no means necessarily historical, solutions to these underlying problems, the problems themselves are nonetheless chronic and have to be addressed if the crisis is to be resolved successfully. Will you be more successful than Diocletian himself and ensure that Rome recovers or even surpasses its former greatness, or provide the Empire with a one-way ticket to the dark ages? That is up to you as delegates. Nonetheless, here are the issues that are at the root of the Crisis. <sup>33</sup>

### **I: The issue of succession**

When the Emperor died, a lack of institutionalised transition of power meant that in the absence of a powerful de-facto heir, discontent or even civil war would almost be guaranteed to follow. There needs to be a clearer system, or perhaps even a total overhaul of the form of government. This is perhaps the most important political problem.

### **II: The division of power**

After the assassination of Alexander Severus, the military has woken up to its supreme ability to influence policy. Alongside a clearer line of succession, there should thus be a more balanced division of power, or a total overhaul of the role of central government. The Senate, the Emperor, The Equestrians and the military (especially the Praetorian Guard) are all players in this regard.

### **III: The growing power disparity with Rome's enemies**

Rome has been forged, maintained and prospered only through the iron fist of its invincible legions. Superior organisation, equipment quality and morale are however becoming relatively less pronounced as Rome's enemies grow more powerful and adapt, and the Roman state is increasing unable to provide incentive to serve in the armed forces and sufficient resources.

### **IV: The administrative overstretch**

The Empire stretches from the Pillars of Hercules to the mountains of Armenia. Over the centuries, it has only grown in territory and economic complexity. Tying into the problem of weak and unreliable central government, this ensures that the Empire is ineffectively governed from

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<sup>33</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20060717182740/http://isthmia.osu.edu/teg/50501/4.htm>

Rome. Response times to invasions are slow, and corruption is widespread in the provinces in the absence of oversight.

**V: The unstable economy**

The Roman Empire has a banking system, but no central bank or official monetary policy. The Emperor has the ability and often short term need to debase the currency. This has caused a chronic devaluation of the Roman currency, led to inflation and the eventual degradation of the wider economy. Furthermore, the Roman subsistence economy which is reliant on slave trade that prevents large scale investment and the expansion of markets, alongside the lack of an effective tax system, all contribute to the endemic problem.

**VI: The breakdown of trade, de-urbanisation and destruction of the middle class**

As the political and financial systems become increasingly unhealthy, the Empire becomes less safe, investment is discouraged, and wealth does not transfer as easily as it once did. Cities and regions are becoming increasingly autarkic, local landlords usurp the prestige and wealth of the middle class and imperial administrators and as a result the tax base is ruined.

**VII: The growing influence of Monotheism**

The unstable and uncertain times of the 3rd century offer the perfect breeding ground for the clarity and promises of monotheism. Christianity is becoming a gradually larger influence on the Empire and is slowly eroding the moral and religious fabric upon which Roman society rests its unity. Should the Roman state embrace or destroy this new development?

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