



VMUN 2024

# Historical Crisis Committee

BACKGROUND GUIDE



# VANCOUVER MODEL UNITED NATIONS

The Twenty-Third Annual Session | January 26–28, 2024

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Dear Delegates,

My name is Brian Qian and it is my honour to serve as your Director of HCC. My dais team and I have been working tirelessly to help create an exciting committee experience and bring you some insightful debate, intrigue, and collaboration.

Since my first experience with Model UN at VMUN three years ago, I have thought a lot about why I love this community of debate and diplomacy so much. One of the reasons is that the world of MUN combines so well with my passion for history and learning, and crisis committees offer the perfect environment to explore the vivid histories, relationships, and dynamics of the people, nations, and conflicts that have come before us. I hope that this committee will allow you to experience some of the passion and joy that I have experienced at VMUN.

As a member of this committee, you are at the helm of Italy's future. Over the past century, the forgotten vestige of the Holy Roman Empire has become the birthplace of the Renaissance and has enjoyed a great period of peace and prosperity. However, the fragmented city-states of Italy are increasingly being looked upon by their neighbours as easy prey. The armies of France, Austria, and the Ottomans are bearing down on the towering spires and endless coffers of your palaces and threaten to destroy the megalopolitan cities of Italy. Delegates, it is your responsibility, whether through warfare, intrigue, or diplomacy, to secure the future of Italy.

If you have any questions about the committee or your position papers, please reach out to me at [hcc@vmun.com](mailto:hcc@vmun.com). I look forward to seeing you at VMUN 2024!

Sincerely,

Brian Qian  
HCC Director

# Position Paper Policy

## What is a Position Paper?

A position paper is a brief overview of a country's stance on the topics being discussed by a particular committee. Though there is no specific format the position paper must follow, it should include a description of your positions your country holds on the issues on the agenda, relevant actions that your country has taken, and potential solutions that your country would support.

At Vancouver Model United Nations, delegates should write a position paper for each of the committee's topics. Each position paper should not exceed one page and should all be combined into a single document per delegate.

For the Historical Crisis Committee, position papers are required.

## Formatting

Position papers should:

- Include the name of the delegate, their country, and the committee
- Be in a standard font (e.g. Times New Roman) with a 12-point font size and 1-inch document margins
- Not include illustrations, diagrams, decorations, national symbols, watermarks, or page borders
- Include citations and a bibliography, in any format, giving due credit to the sources used in research (not included in the 1-page limit)

## Due Dates and Submission Procedure

Position papers for this committee must be submitted by **11:59 PM PT on January 22, 2024**. Once your position paper is complete, please save the file as your last name, your first name and send it as an attachment in an email to your committee's email address, with the subject heading as "[last name] [first name] — Position Paper". Please do not add any other attachments to the email.

Both your position papers should be combined into a single PDF or Word document file; position papers submitted in another format will not be accepted.

Each position paper will be manually reviewed and considered for the Best Researched award.

The email address for this committee is [hcc@vmun.com](mailto:hcc@vmun.com).

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# Italian Wars, 1492

## Overview

The year is 1492, and the death of the great statesman Lorenzo de' Medici reverberates through the fields of Tuscany, spelling a new age for Italy. For the past four decades, the fragile balance of power in Italy was safeguarded by the Treaty of Lodi. Established in 1455, after multiple states in Northern Italy solidified into the Italian League, the Treaty of Lodi ensured peace between Italian states and united them in a powerful alliance to dispel the threat of foreign interference from the Holy Roman Empire and France.<sup>1</sup> This careful balancing act was upheld by Lorenzo de' Medici and his policy of equilibrium, which sought to uphold the balance of power in Italy. Despite his efforts to maintain peace, towards the end of his life, cracks of instability in the alliance were beginning to show. A conflict with the papacy between the Kingdom of Naples showed that the Italians were not as united as they seemed and, when Lorenzo finally died, it shattered Italy's facade of tranquility and unity.<sup>2</sup>

As the fate of Italy is uncertain, multiple foreign nations seek to extend their spheres of influence into the divided states of Italy, threatening the sovereignty of the region. With the entire region under only nominal control of the Holy Roman Empire, Emperor Frederick III seeks to reassert his imperial authority by reclaiming control over Italy's city-states.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the Spanish crown aims to control the Kingdom of Naples, encompassing the entirety of Southern Italy; however, this claim is contested by competing French dynastic claims and the legitimacy of the current ruling dynasty.<sup>4</sup> In addition to their dynastic claims in Naples and the rest of Southern Italy, the French have long-held territorial ambitions to control the vital trade corridor of the Merchant Republic of Genoa, which is currently under the dictatorship of the Sforza of Milan. Should the Italian states fail in their resistance against these foreign forces, the intellectual and cultural vitality kindled by the Renaissance may be lost forever.

In spite of the challenges facing Italy, the various powers of Italy seem more divided than ever. The Milanese and Tuscans, who had been staunch allies against the Holy See and the Neapolitans, are now in direct competition for political supremacy over Northern Italy. Moreover, the ambition of the Venetians threatens to bring them into conflict with the pope. It will take skilled diplomacy and existential threats to unite the Italian polities to face the challenges that threaten the peninsula.

Lorenzo de' Medici's death also represents the death of one of the greatest artistic patrons of the early Italian Renaissance. By providing financial support for some of the most important artists of the 15th century, such as Sandro Botticelli and a young Michelangelo, Lorenzo furthered the reputation of Florence as the cultural centre of Europe and cemented the Medici banking family as the epicentre of wealth and political power in Italy.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Riccardo Fubini, "The Italian League and the Policy of the Balance of Power at the Accession of Lorenzo De' Medici," *The Journal of Modern History* 67, December 1995. <https://doi.org/10.1086/245014>.

<sup>2</sup> Richard M. Tristano, "The Precedence Controversy and the Devolution of Ferrara: A Shift in Renaissance Politics," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 2017. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44816436>.

<sup>3</sup> "A Weak yet Tenacious Emperor: Frederick III," *Die Welt der Habsburger*, n.d. <https://www.habsburger.net/en/chapter/weak-yet-tenacious-emperor-frederick-iii>.

<sup>4</sup> Applied History Research Group, "The End of Europe's Middle Ages - Italy's City-States," *Umb.edu*, 2021. [http://www.faculty.umb.edu/gary\\_zabel/Courses/Phil%20281b/Philosophy%20of%20Magic/Dante.%20etc/Philosophers/End/FRAMES/cityframe.html](http://www.faculty.umb.edu/gary_zabel/Courses/Phil%20281b/Philosophy%20of%20Magic/Dante.%20etc/Philosophers/End/FRAMES/cityframe.html).

<sup>5</sup> "Lorenzo De' Medici – the Medici Family," *The Medici Family*, n.d. <https://themedicifamily.com/lorenzo-de-medici>.

This reputation, however, is under threat from several challengers. In particular, the Sforza family aims to make Milan the principal court of Europe, with massive architectural and artistic projects which are in direct competition with the artists and architects of Florence.<sup>6</sup> The Holy See also aspires to establish Rome as the focal point of Christian Europe, with vast amounts of papal wealth ready for the acquisition of treasures around the world.<sup>7</sup> With the Florentine finances withering, and the neighbouring states of Milan and Rome on the cultural rise, the flow of wealth, goods, and culture seems to be diverting from the clutches of the Medici. Should any state aim to achieve dominance over the rest of Italy, it would be crucial to build a network of *maecenas* to propel their cities to the highest echelons of European society.

This committee will represent members of the various dynasties, families, and factions that comprise the rulers, generals, and patricians of the duchies and republics of Italy. Members of the committee will be responsible for the collective defense of the Italian Peninsula as well as the furtherment of their own states. Italy is on the precipice of disaster, and it will be this committee that decides its fate.

## Timeline

**476 CE** — The Western Roman Empire falls, following the defeat of Romulus Augustus—the final Roman Emperor—at the hands of the barbarian leader Odoacer, leading to the end of Roman control over a united Italy.<sup>8</sup>

**539 CE** — Justinian, the Eastern Roman Emperor from 527 CE to 565 CE, reclaims Rome during the Gothic Wars against the Ostrogoth kings of Italy.<sup>9</sup> Much of the remaining wealth and infrastructure of central Italy is destroyed, and the region soon slips out of *de facto* Roman control forever.<sup>10</sup>

**756 CE** — The Papal States are established following the Donation of Pepin, wherein the Franks were able to reclaim control of Rome from the barbarian Lombard invaders and return the lands to the Pope.<sup>11</sup>

**951 CE** — Otto I of the Holy Roman Empire reclaims the Kingdom of Italy, following his military invasion of the Lombards. This, at least nominally, reasserts imperial control over Northern Italy.<sup>12</sup>

**1096** — The era of the Crusades begins, providing colossal economic opportunities for the merchant Republics of Venice and Genoa, who profit immensely from the transport of Crusaders and plundering captured cities.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Alfredo Bosio, "Ludovico Sforza | Duke of Milan," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, May 23, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ludovico-Sforza>.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Norris, "The papacy during the Renaissance," *Metmuseum.org*, 2019. [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/pape/hd\\_pape.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/pape/hd_pape.htm).

<sup>8</sup> "Odoacer | King of Italy," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Odoacer>.

<sup>9</sup> "Gothic War (535-554) - HistoriRex.com," *historiarex.com*, n.d. <https://historiarex.com/e/en/240-gothic-war-535-554>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> "Donation of Pippin | Italian History," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Donation-of-Pippin>.

<sup>12</sup> "Otto I the Great (912-973) - HistoriRex.com," *historiarex.com*, n.d. <https://historiarex.com/e/en/290-otto-i-the-great-912-973>.

<sup>13</sup> "Crusades - the First Crusade and the Establishment of the Latin States," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Crusades/The-First-Crusade-and-the-establishment-of-the-Latin-states#ref118437>

**1183** — The Peace of Constance ends the War of the Lombard League, as the alliance of Italian city-states defeats an effort from Frederick I to bring Italy under direct control of the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>14</sup> This marks the end of imperial control of Italy, as the emperor's authority significantly eroded.<sup>15</sup>

**1256** — The War of Saint Sabas begins, sparking a rivalry between Venice and Genoa that leads the two merchant republics to engage in intermittent conflict for the next century, resulting in a brutal rivalry between the states.<sup>16</sup>

**1260** — Martino I della Scala becomes *capitano del popolo* in Verona, marking the beginning of the age of oligarchic dynasties in Italian communes. Soon, these *signorie* will come to dominate cities all over Italy.<sup>17</sup>

**1305** — King Phillip IV of France forces the papal conclave to elect Pope Clement V, who will later refuse to return to Rome and instead establish the Holy See in the exclave of Avignon, effectively making the papacy an instrument of the French throne.<sup>18</sup>

**1347** — The Black Death arrives at the port of Messina, spreading the pandemic to Italy. Over the next half-century, it kills over one-third of the Italian population.<sup>19</sup>

**1402** — Gian Galeazzo Visconti, the first duke of Milan, dies, shattering his realm as a result. Visconti had managed to unite almost all of Northern Italy during his lifetime, through conquest and dynastic reunification.<sup>20</sup> Following his death, his lands were divided amongst his issues.<sup>21</sup>

**1423** — Venice and Milan begin a three-decade long struggle, sparking the Wars in Lombardy. The two powers oversee fluid alliances and the rise of mercenary bands during this conflict.<sup>22</sup>

**1434** — Cosimo I de' Medici rises to power in Florence, wielding supreme influence through a republican facade.<sup>23</sup> His subjugation of Milan through the installment of the Sforza will go on to define Italian politics for the next 50 years.<sup>24</sup>

**1436** — The dome of the Florence Cathedral, designed by Brunelleschi almost twenty years prior, is completed. The dome would serve as an icon of the financial and cultural power of Florence and mark an enormous feat of Renaissance engineering.

**1454** — The Treaty of Lodi is established, ending the Wars in Lombardy. It defines the four main Italian powers and establishes the Italian League, a pact of non-aggression between the Italian nations.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> "Lombard League | Holy Roman Empire, Papal States, Guelfs | Britannica," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Lombard-League#ref53107>.

<sup>16</sup> Jacoby David, "Three Notes on Crusader Acre," *Zeitschrift Des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, 1993. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27931460>.

<sup>17</sup> Chris Wickham, "Italy | Facts, Geography, & History," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, April 10, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Italy>.

<sup>18</sup> Lynn Nelson, "The Avignon papacy 1305-1378 | Lectures in Medieval History," *www.vlib.us*, n.d. <http://www.vlib.us/medieval/lectures/avignon.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Chris Wickham, "Italy | Facts, Geography, & History," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, April 10, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Italy>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Riccardo Fubini, "The Italian League and the Policy of the Balance of Power at the Accession of Lorenzo De' Medici," *The Journal of Modern History* 67, December 1995. <https://doi.org/10.1086/245014>.



**1464** — Francesco I Sforza of Milan, a close ally of Cosimo de' Medici, occupies and puppets the Republic of Genoa, ensuring Milanese power in Liguria.<sup>26</sup>

**1478** — The internal politics of Florence is shaken to its core as the ruling Medici family is targeted by the Pazzi Conspiracy, which aims to overthrow the Medici and bring back the republican government. However, the plot fails, and the Medici are strengthened politically.<sup>27</sup>

**1492** — Lorenzo de' Medici dies after ruling Florence for 23 years. This ends the Italian League and leaves Italy vulnerable to foreign invasion.<sup>28</sup> This marks the beginning of the crisis.

## Historical Analysis

### Italian Late Antiquity

The underlying conflicts of the Italian Wars can be traced back to the beginning of post-Roman conflict in the Italian Peninsula. Immediately after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, the Italian Peninsula was largely settled by semi-romanized Germanic tribes, such as Ostrogoths, Vandals, and Alans, who founded their own kingdoms in the region. However, the region was still very much under the dominion of Constantinople, as all these kingdoms were under the control of the Eastern Roman Empire, otherwise known as the Byzantine Empire.<sup>29</sup> In addition, most of the political machinery and institutions of the Late Roman Empire were still left intact with Roman law and the Senate still holding tangible power.<sup>30</sup>

The pivotal moment in this relationship between Rome and Constantinople was the arrival of Lombard invaders, who aspired to form an independent Kingdom of Italy or *Regnum totius Italiae*.<sup>31</sup> The Byzantines, who were exhausted by war with the Ostrogoths and the plague, were unable to stop the Lombard advance, and Italy was soon completely inundated with Lombard armies. The kingdom reached its zenith in 744 CE, and its invasion resulted in the most important geographical divisions in Italy—the distinction between Northern and Southern Italy, a separation that would cleave Italy into the Lombard controlled north and Byzantine south.<sup>32</sup>

The Lombard realm was divided by the last bastion under Byzantine control, the area that would later form the Papal States. To the north of this strip of land lay the Langobardia Maior, where power was centralized and military authority was directly projected by the Lombard capital of Pavia.<sup>33</sup> In the south, which would later become the area of the Kingdom of Naples, the land was largely governed by semi-autonomous duchies and princes, who only loosely owed allegiance to the Lombards.<sup>34</sup> This division of papal, Northern, and Southern Italy would persist until the unification of Italy almost a millennium later.

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<sup>26</sup> Alfredo Bosio, "Ludovico Sforza | Duke of Milan," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, May 23, 2023.  
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ludovico-Sforza>.

<sup>27</sup> "Lorenzo"

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Chris Wickham, "Italy | Facts, Geography, & History," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, April 10, 2019.  
<https://www.britannica.com/place/Italy>.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Erich B. Anderson, "Welcome Invaders: The Lombards Claim Byzantine Italy," *Medieval Warfare* 4, 2014.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/48578388>.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

## Aachen and Rome

One of the key conflicts and political lines in Medieval Italy was the division and rivalry between the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy. The tense history between the two Western Roman institutions often erupted into conflict during the Middle Ages, with the Northern Italian states being caught and entangled in these. Ultimately, the origin of these clashes stems from the foundation of these two institutions themselves. By the mid-700s CE, the Lombard Kingdom of Italy was capable of overwhelming any real opposition to its complete territorial hegemony over the peninsula and was even able to push out the Byzantine stronghold of Ravenna, taking control over parts of the papal lands.<sup>35</sup> With the threat of Lombard subjugation looming, Pope Stephen II reached out to the powerful Kingdom of the Franks to help defend their sovereignty, which resulted in their king, Pepin the Short, heeding the call and invading the Lombard realm.<sup>36, 37</sup> Pepin was able to force the Lombards to surrender much of Central Italy to form the Papal States. This would later be known as the Donation of Pepin.<sup>38</sup> This solidified the Frankish position and gave the Franks leverage over the Holy See.<sup>39</sup>

Charlemagne, Pepin's successor, was crowned Roman Emperor in 800 CE. This gave the Franks further dominion over the selection of the papacy due to the late Imperial Roman tradition of having the emperor choosing the papal.<sup>40</sup> From 800 CE onwards, the Holy Roman Emperor generally had significant ability to influence the election of the pope, with the papacy reliant on the protection of the Holy Roman Empire.

This system of temporal investiture was rather successful until the mid-1000s CE when the arrangement finally collapsed. Henry IV ascended the imperial throne as a child, which emboldened Pope Gregory VII to begin reforms to bring the papal succession under the control of the Church.<sup>41</sup> Pope Gregory VII's inflammatory actions brought swift retribution from the Holy Roman Empire, resulting in the Investiture Controversy, a large-scale dispute over investiture laws between the papacy and the empire. Following the end of the conflict in 1085, Henry IV emerged victorious, with Gregory VII exiled; he was crowned Holy Roman Emperor by his own appointed antipope. Nonetheless, his triumph was immensely costly due to his alienation of his own subjects and the failure to bring the papal succession back under control.<sup>42</sup> The papacy had managed to assert itself as an independent entity and achieved a state of political parity with the empire. As a result of the conflict, the relationship between these two Romes would come to underscore Italian politics for the next three centuries.

## Rise of Merchant Republics

Throughout the economic history of the Mediterranean, trade played a crucial role in mercantile expansion and facilitating economic growth. This was no different in early Medieval Italy, where maritime trade with the Byzantines and other eastern powers was extremely profitable.<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, traders were regularly threatened by piracy and political instability, leading to conflicts that disrupted the passage of goods. These dangers resulted

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> "Donation of Pippin | Italian History," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Donation-of-Pippin>.

<sup>37</sup> Anderson, "Lombards"

<sup>38</sup> Britannica, "Donation"

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Uta-Renate Blumenthal, "The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century," *JSTOR*, 1988. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fht77.10>.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Avner Greif, "On the Political Foundations of the Late Medieval Commercial Revolution: Genoa during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," *The Journal of Economic History*, June 1994. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022050700014479>.

in the formation of the merchant republics, which were semi-independent city-states that grew out of collectives of traders and merchants. These emerged to form the Venetian Republic on the apex of the Adriatic, whereas the Republic of Genoa expanded from a Ligurian city in the nook of the Tyrrhenian Sea.<sup>44</sup> While these republics were quite similar in aim and objective, they differed significantly in their organization. Both of the governments experienced the same fundamental political issue: inter-familial rivalries that dominated their internal politics. As a result of their democratic systems, the elections of their nations were constantly contested by hereditary dynasties, who often came into conflict with one another. In Genoa, the *della Volta* faction persistently aimed to eradicate all possible political oppositions, plunging the state into civil war in both 1164 and 1189.<sup>45</sup> The same occurred in Venice, resulting in recurring inter-familial conflicts. The Genoese addressed this by appointing foreign military leaders in order to better manage politics and maintain a balance of power. However, the Venetians aimed to delegate and distribute the power of their leaders, the Doges, and retain a strong democratic tradition.<sup>46</sup> These measures resulted in the Genoese building a consolidated autocracy, vesting significant power in their leaders, while the Venetians were able to preserve democracy and dismantled the power of the dynasties. Regardless of the methods, these Republics were exceptionally effective at utilizing their maritime and capital resources, soon finding themselves with possessions dotting the Mediterranean and Black Seas.

These powerful political entities would become economic powerhouses in commerce and naval power projection, wielding significant influence on Mediterranean politics. As Christian European monarchs embarked on the Crusades, Venice and Genoa, along with other smaller maritime powers such as Pisa and Amalfi, were able to profit immensely from the transportation of crusaders and loot. In addition, the Venetians were able to plunder vast amounts of wealth from sacking cities during these conflicts. For instance, during the Sack of Constantinople, the Venetians and Catholic Crusaders overpowered the Byzantines and destroyed their empire, leading to their final demise in 1453.<sup>47</sup> The Genoese would also find success in military expansion, albeit in a much less spectacular manner. Through shrewd political schemes, annexation of territories from the Crusades, and naval coercion, they created a remarkable network of trading posts from Crimea to Belgium, fortresses, and exclusive commercial agreements.<sup>48</sup> Ultimately, these Republics formed the backbone of Italy's trade artery to the rest of the world, and they played a substantial role in the rapid economic expansion of the Renaissance.

## The Late Middle Ages

With the political divisions of Northern and Southern Italy cemented and the battle lines between the papacy and the emperor drawn, Italy was a powderkeg in the Late Middle Ages (1250–1450). As the military power of the Papal States was still inferior to that of the Germans, the inherent direction of papal foreign policy was to quash potential pathways for imperial aggression and secure militaristic allies to protect them from the Holy Roman Empire. The papacy remedied both these matters by granting a claim over Naples, an imperial vassal, to Charles of Anjou, the brother of the King of France.<sup>49</sup> While this diplomatic play seemed reasonable at the moment–

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Avner Greif, "On the Political Foundations of the Late Medieval Commercial Revolution: Genoa during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," *The Journal of Economic History* 54, June 1994. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022050700014479>.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Applied History Research Group, "The End of Europe's Middle Ages - Italy's City-States," *Umb.edu*, 2021. [http://www.faculty.umb.edu/gary\\_zabel/Courses/Phil%20281b/Philosophy%20of%20Magic/Dante.%20etc/Philosophers/End/FRAMES/cityframe.html](http://www.faculty.umb.edu/gary_zabel/Courses/Phil%20281b/Philosophy%20of%20Magic/Dante.%20etc/Philosophers/End/FRAMES/cityframe.html).

wiping out the last German-controlled bastions in Italy and tipping the scales of power firmly in favor of the Holy See—time would soon show that inviting the French into Italian affairs was a grave mistake. The French throne was emboldened, seeing themselves as the protectors of the Church, and eagerly embraced the role. This forced the papacy to become ever more reliant on their assistance.<sup>50</sup>

By the 1300s, the papal institution was more French than Italian, with the French throne having control over the papacy. The situation became so dire that by 1308, the French had nationalized the papacy and coerced the pope into relocating to the exclave of Avignon, beginning a period known as the Babylonian captivity of the Church.<sup>51</sup> Not only was the political sovereignty of the Holy See destroyed, but the moral authority of the Church was also nearly eroded. Italian antipopes and heretics sprung up all over Europe as the Avignon papacy was viewed as illegitimate and an instrument of the French. The arrival of the plague in Italy furthered tensions, resulting in thousands of deaths and civil unrest. The people of the Italian papal realm grew increasingly resentful of the pope for abandoning Italy in its time of greatest need. With the Black Death ravaging Italy and virtually no authority left to impose any semblance of order, local despots and warlords took it upon themselves to seize the situation and butcher their own fiefdoms out of the Papal States.<sup>52</sup> It took until 1370 for the pope to return to Rome, at which point, the realm of the Holy See had dissolved to where true papal control extended to just a few townships. It would take until the late 1400s until the papacy could consolidate its lands and assert its authority under centralized control again.<sup>53</sup>

## The Rise of the City-States

The Neapolitans, under competing French and Imperial control, encompassed the South of Italy, and the papacy controlled central Italy. As a result, a large political vacuum was created in the rich, agrarian heartlands of Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany–Northern Italy. Distinct from the civic structures of the other Italian states, the polities that filled this vacuum did not opt for a republic, theocracy, or monarchy.<sup>54</sup> Instead, their political affairs gradually shifted towards a distinctive hereditary autocracy, with familial clans governing all aspects of the administration. The most notable instance of this shift was the ascent of the Medici family in the Republic of Florence.

Although Florence had been a hub for trade and industry for over three centuries while it was an oligarchic republic, it was the era of Medici domination that saw the city become the focal point of Medieval Europe, sparking the Renaissance and surpassing all competitors in splendour and stature.<sup>55</sup> The beginning of the Medici family came with the patriarch Cosimo I (1389–1464), who, despite his legacy and exorbitant successes, was initially described by his contemporaries as a terminally indecisive man. His actions were consistently reactionary in nature and showed no inclinations to long-term strategic planning.<sup>56</sup> Despite these claims, it is important to note that, despite his apparent apathy towards administration, he spent his life curating a powerful network of contacts and allies which allowed him to rapidly progress his political career. Through the Medici

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Jean Boutier, “The Republic of Florence (from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Centuries): Historical and Political Issues,” *Revue Française de Science Politique*, 2014. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/revfranscipoleng.64.6.1>.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Riccardo Fubini and Sarah-Louise Raillard, “Cosimo De’ Medici’s Regime: His Rise to Power (1434),” *Revue Française de Science Politique (English Edition)*, 2014. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/revfranscipoleng.64.6.81>.

bank, which he had founded, he was able to attract clientele from the highest echelons of society, ultimately becoming the preferred bank of the papacy, gaining invaluable allies in the Church and building his wealth.<sup>57</sup> Utilizing these vast funds, he engaged in aggressive patronage and commission of artists to produce works of propaganda which established the reputation and legitimacy of the Medici family.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, his great deeds of generosity and charity also served to lighten his reputation, which would have been stained by his profession as a moneylender as it was considered usury under the doctrine of the Catholic Church. Moreover, patronage of architectural works also served an essential role in deluding the Florentine people, as they were profoundly proud of their republican tradition and would not easily submit to the rule of a prince.<sup>59</sup> For example, the patronage of works such as the Medici Palace, the Church of Saint Lorenzo, and the Dome of the Florentine Cathedral showed the public the possibilities under the supremacy of a strong autocrat, tuning their palates toward his intrigues. In conjunction with his apparent lack of any political ambition, these façades were initially effective in taming his political opposition.

Despite these underhanded tactics, by the late 1430s, his republican opponents had developed strong suspicions to his secret intentions and gathered enough political capital to have him exiled.<sup>60</sup> However, they were unable to keep him away for long, as Cosimo was able to draw on his connection with the Pope Eugene IV to fashion a conspiracy that reinstalled himself as *signoria*, the autocratic leader of the city. In return, he would assist the Holy Father in dispelling the Milanese threat by forcing the ascension of the mercenary captain Francesco I Sforza as the Duke of Milan.<sup>61</sup> In doing so, Cosimo solidified his position at the helm of Florence, and solidified Florence's position at the helm of Italy.

## Current Situation

### Italian Powers

By 1492, five major Italian players had emerged: the Republic of Venice, the Republic of Florence, the Kingdom of Naples, the Duchy of Milan, and the Papal States. The main foreign powers threatening the region are the Holy Roman Empire, the Aragonese, and the French.

### Republic of Venice

One of the most powerful and influential Italian states by 1492, the Republic of Venice is at the pinnacle of its military and economic powers. It held a prominent position, fueled by the myth of Venice being the immortal successor of the Roman Republic and as the sole democratic Italian Republic.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Richard M. Tristano, "The Precedence Controversy and the Devolution of Ferrara: A Shift in Renaissance Politics," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 2017. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44816436>.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Riccardo Fubini and Sarah-Louise Raillard, "Cosimo De' Medici's Regime: His Rise to Power (1434)," *Revue Française de Science Politique (English Edition)*, 2014. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/revfranscipoleng.64.6.81>.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Robert Finlay, "The Immortal Republic: The Myth of Venice during the Italian Wars (1494- 1530)," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 30, 1999. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2544605>.

Politically, however, Venice stands divided. The importance of long-standing maritime traditions have resulted in the republic's overseas expansion—the *stato de mar*—being prioritized more heavily than its mainland counterpart—the *stato de firma*.<sup>63</sup> Even as the Queen of the Adriatic's domain stretches from Crete to Alexandria and beyond the Pillars of Hercules, the old order of the Mediterranean is soon to be abruptly shattered, to the detriment of the Venetians. The discovery of the sea route to India, around the Cape of Good Hope, would have a ruinous effect on the Venetian trade network, rendering the entire the Venetian-controlled Alexandrian overland route obsolete, with the new sea route offering a much faster and direct route. In addition, the Ottomans threaten to undo the Venetian dominance on the Aegean, with their colonies in Euboea already falling under the Turkish armies and the trading posts in the Black Sea cut off. To the Venetian treasury, the losses sustained in the East seem irreversible, and it will take sizable gains in the Italian mainland to compensate for the downfall of its maritime possessions.

The Venetian republican tradition, stretching back to its initial founding, is carried on by the current government led by Doge Agostino Barbarigo. Even though well-defined democratic systems exist in Venice, electoral and judicial systems are oligarchically exclusive and only represent the interests of a few elite merchant families.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, the powers of the Doge are also strongly restricted; Barbarigo is expected to not have any male heirs as a gesture of respect towards his position and to show that he prioritizes state affairs over familial and dynastic ambitions. In addition, his rule is overseen by the Great Council, the legislative and judicial body of the republic.<sup>65</sup> The Council of Ten is the most significant part of the organization, holding the responsibility of limiting the power of the Doge and serving as an overseer against the consolidation of power.<sup>66</sup>

Venetian diplomatic ambitions will largely revolve around the containment of the Ottomans and expansion of territories into central Italy to protect the Venetian control of trade and their wealth. In past years, under the nominal Treaty of Lodi, there have been small-scale conflicts and border wars, but with the end of the equilibrium policy, the door is open for Venice to attempt hegemony over Italy. Although Venice is best known for its naval prowess, its immense wealth allows it plenty of leeway and flexibility in the age of mercenary captains.

## Republic of Florence

The birthplace of the Renaissance and home to Europe's most talented sculptors, artists, and intelligentsia, Florence experienced a golden age during the reign of Lorenzo de' Medici, flourishing under his guidance. Despite the prosperity that Lorenzo provided, he ultimately failed to prepare his state and businesses for succession. While his patronage of art and architecture brought Florence to the forefront of the European stage, it also drained the capital of the Medici Bank, putting the financial security of the state in jeopardy. His heir, the significantly less capable Piero di Lorenzo de Medici, faces foreign pressure from the Milanese and internal instability from republican radicals.<sup>67</sup> Unless the Florentine state and Medici family can make some painful

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<sup>63</sup> John Law, "The Venetian Mainland State in the Fifteenth Century," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 44, January 1, 1992. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3679103>.

<sup>64</sup> Laura Ikens Stern, "Politics and Law in Renaissance Florence and Venice," *The American Journal of Legal History* 46, April 2004. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3692441>.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Raymond de Roover, "The Medici Bank Financial and Commercial Operations," *The Journal of Economic History*, November 1946. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022050700056916>.

changes to democratize and reign in overextension, it would seem that the golden age of Florence may finally come to an end.

The centerpiece of the Medici and Florence, the Medici Bank is the institution that brought the wealth, fame, and capital that sparked the Renaissance. Like any other bank, the Medici bank issued loans as part of its financial strategy, but given the stigma around moneylending and usury, they also diversified in other fields such as currency exchanges. At any given time during the Treaty of Lodi, Florence would be awash with religious pilgrims and tourists, who required currency exchange services. Due to Medici's large network of banks across Europe, they were also able to engage in currency speculation, a lucrative industry given the volatility of early modern economics.<sup>68</sup> To complement this, the Medici often financed trading business and also engaged in the import business, even with the dangers of the medieval Mediterranean.<sup>69</sup> Aside from the financial injections of the Medici family business, the Florentine economy is also bolstered by its strong industry, with thriving wool and textile production and providing a valuable basis for trade and export, creating sustainable economic growth.<sup>70</sup> Nonetheless, Lorenzo's rampant spending had significantly reduced the Bank's ability to continue supporting the activities of the Florentine state, and the family must decide between implementing austerity measures or exploring more sources of income to subsidize the state's opulent spending.

Politically, the Medici find their position at the top of the Florentine social pyramid under constant threat. Despite having effectively eliminated any rivaling political families, the Florentine people are growing weary of the Medici's authoritarian rule and seek to restore the city back to its republican roots. In particular, the radical Dominican friar Savonarola, invited to the city by Lorenzo, preached the sins of the Catholic Church and the Medici family. He has grown a significant following and his radical ideas and claimed prophetic powers threaten the stability of the Medici grip on power.<sup>71</sup> Notably, he predicts that Florence will flourish and become a new Rome, if the city can overcome a great invader from across the mountains.<sup>72</sup> While the latter part of his prediction seems to be inevitable, it will be up to the statesmen of Florence to determine if the same can be said about the former.

## Kingdom of Naples

The Kingdom of Naples holds the unfortunate description of being the amongst the most coveted thrones in Europe, with competing claims from the Angevins, the Holy Roman Empire, and Aragon. Regardless of the foreign dangers that plague the kingdom's shores, it has enjoyed a remarkable period of growth and prosperity.<sup>73</sup>

Naples is led by its king: Ferdinand I. Although he is a member of the Trastámara dynasty of Aragon, he rules an independent Naples, free of foreign interference. This title, however, is challenged by many adversaries, with the French and Spanish desperate to bring Naples under their domain. Furthermore, the kingdom is also wracked by internal instability; Ferdinand's crushing of a Barons' Revolt in 1486 alienated the nobility and weakened his public support. To add on the king's troubles, his external diplomacy has alienated a large portion

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Richard C. Trexler, "Lorenzo De' Medici and Savonarola, Martyrs for Florence," *Renaissance Quarterly* 31, 1978. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2860227>.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Richard M. Tristano, "The Precedence Controversy and the Devolution of Ferrara: A Shift in Renaissance Politics," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 2017. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44816436>.

of Italy, with both the papacy and Milan firmly against him. Naples must find a way to weather the coming storm, lest fall under external overlords again.<sup>74</sup>

## Duchy of Milan

Despite having secured its position as a powerhouse in Northern Italian politics, the Duchy of Milan faces a vicious power struggle between its regent and duke. The duchy was only ruled in name by Gian Galeazzo Sforza, whose *de facto* powers are non-existent. Instead, the real leader behind Naples is his regent, Ludovico Sforza.<sup>75</sup> Alienated from his own realm, Gian Galeazzo holds court in the former Lombard capital of Pavia and languishes. However, his wife, Isabella, appealed to her grandfather Ferdinand I of Naples, who presented an ultimatum to Ludovico in 1492 which demanded Ludovico to reinstate Galeazzo back in power.

Even as the upper echelons of the duchy are split on this dynastic dispute, the economy is flourishing; the Milanese court commissions great works of architecture and provides patronage for artists and sculptors such as the visionary Leonardo da Vinci and architect Donato Bramante. With continued financial support and more efforts to expand the galleries and squares of Milan, it is conceivable that Milan will soon overtake Florence as the cultural and economic centre of Europe.<sup>76</sup>

To fund these lavish ventures, the Milanese rely on heavy taxation and the exploitation of their vassal: Genoa. After wresting control of the declining merchant republic away from the French, the Sforza family quickly moved to consolidate their control and utilize the republic's resources to fund their own projects. Yet, even as Sforza rule over their new vassal seems absolute, the French throne is once again starting to pick up interest in reacquiring the Genoese vestige. It will take vast resources and powerful alliances to stop the will of the French.

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## Papal States

By 1492, the sanctity and moral authority of the papacy had largely eroded into nothingness. The institution was rife with corruption, nepotism, and hedonistic parties. The Chair of Saint Peter was continuously occupied by the relatives and issues of the wealthy and powerful, who sought to use the office to their own advantage and for their own political gain. However, even with this, the impartiality of the Catholic Church was completely ignored and the Papal States began functioning like any other proto-Machiavellian state.<sup>78</sup>

The Papal States encompass almost all of central Italy, stretching over a valuable and fertile landscape. It has sea access on both sides of Italy, reaching into both the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic. However, with the papacy only recently returning to a neglected and plague-stricken Rome, the land and riches was seized by local nobles and

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Alfredo Bosio, "Ludovico Sforza | Duke of Milan," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, May 23, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ludovico-Sforza>.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Francis Murphy, "Alexander vi | Biography, Legacy, & Facts," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alexander-VI>.



princes, leaving the Holy See with little centralized authority to levy taxes or generate revenue.<sup>79</sup> Even so, the coffers of the Curia are always constantly replenished by the sale of indulgences, simony, and borrowed funds. The vast funds are, therefore, used by the papacy to patronize great artists, acquire rare antiquaries, and to throw debauched parties, attracting the European nobility.

Even so, the Papal States, led by Alexander VI, does have some semblance of unified political goals. In particular, the papacy aims to keep the power of Naples and Venice under their control, having already excommunicated the King of Naples and invited the French to depose him in 1489. This policy can be viewed as the continuation of the equilibrium policy of Lorenzo de' Medici.

## Initiating Crisis

Lorenzo de' Medici's death had three major impacts on the politics, diplomacy, and stability of the Italian peninsula. Firstly, it created a systemic and profound impact on the Republic of Florence, with Lorenzo leaving behind a power void that will take swift but strong leadership to fill. With the dire state of Florentine finances and decline of their hegemony over Northern Italy, Florence may soon be unable to assert their financial and militaristic might to the same extent under Lorenzo.<sup>80</sup> In addition, Lorenzo's lavish spending policies and patronage of artists has left the Medici bank dangerously overextended, threatening to put their whole family into crisis. Soon Florence may have to choose between Italian preeminence or financial stability.<sup>81</sup>

Apart from Florentine affairs, Lorenzo's death opens the door to conflict between the powers of Italy, with the Treaty of Lodi finally collapsing. The small skirmishes during their time of peace will turn into total war, ravaging the hills of Italy, with vast fortunes being spent on mercenary armies and grand fleets. The long festering disputes between the competing families and politics will now be taken to the battlefield. The Milanese and Sforza aim to consolidate their wealth and begin a challenge on Florence for supremacy. The Papal States aim to subordinate the north, and diminish the Venetians' influence. Meanwhile, the internal politics of Florence are in turmoil, with republicans on the verge of taking over the government.

However, these conflicts may have to wait, as external nations look hungrily upon the priceless trading posts and vast farmlands and riches of Italy. While the French, Germans or Spanish may lack the grand architecture of the metropolises of Italy, they make up for it in sheer power and military prowess. It would take a strong alliance of Italian states to even begin to rival the foreign threats plaguing Italy.

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<sup>79</sup> Applied History Research Group, "The End of Europe's Middle Ages - Italy's City-States," *Umb.edu*, 2021. [http://www.faculty.umb.edu/gary\\_zabel/Courses/Phil%20281b/Philosophy%20of%20Magic/Dante.%20etc/Philosophers/End/FRAMES/cityframe.html](http://www.faculty.umb.edu/gary_zabel/Courses/Phil%20281b/Philosophy%20of%20Magic/Dante.%20etc/Philosophers/End/FRAMES/cityframe.html).

<sup>80</sup> Raymond de Roover, "The Medici Bank Financial and Commercial Operations," *The Journal of Economic History*, November 1946. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022050700056916>.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*.

### Agostino Barbarigo

Barbarigo leads the Republic of Venice as their Doge, and his rule and guidance will determine the fate of the declining empire. Controlling the Republic of Venice means that he has direct access to vast amounts of wealth and credit—more than enough to hire entire standing armies of *condottieri* mercenaries to complement the already dominant Venetian fleet, rivaled in size by only the Ottomans.<sup>82</sup> Despite the slow decline of Venice, they are still one of the largest and most influential states in Italy. Barbarigo favours a conciliatory attitude towards the other Italian city-states and will play a crucial role in the formation of any defense against foreign interference in Italian affairs.

### Ferdinand I of Naples

As the King of Naples, Ferdinand's position is rather unstable, and he has powerful enemies looking to usurp him at any opportunity. With the papacy excommunicating him and openly calling for him to be deposed in favour of the French, he is certainly alienated amongst the Italian city-states.<sup>83</sup> He does, however, garner support from the Medici, who may assist him in maintaining his power, as Ferdinand serves as a counterbalance against papal power. As a result of being threatened by so many different factions, Ferdinand certainly has no grand ambitions of Italian domination and would much rather favour a cooperative stance in order to resolve peace between Italian states to rebuke a potential foreign incursion.

### Pope Alexander VI

As the leader of the Catholic world, Alexander VI is purported head of all of Christian Europe. Although this may seem like a lofty title, the reality of the situation is that the reputation of the title of His Holiness has been significantly dwindled.<sup>84</sup> With little real interest in matters of religion or furthering the Catholic domain, Alexander VI would much rather use the role for his own personal and dynastic gain through the siphoning of church funds. As a member of the Aragonese nobility, he vehemently disfavours the rule of Ferdinand I of Naples and would much rather install one of his relatives on the throne. Similarly, the power of the Venetians in the north poses a threat to the careful balance of power, and curtailing their power is a high priority to protect papal hegemony in Latium.<sup>85</sup> Due to the reputation of the Church as a corrupt and partisan organization, the abilities traditionally granted by the Keys of Saint Peter are severely diminished.<sup>86</sup> Regardless, Pope Alexander VI has the authority to, in theory, excommunicate enemies of the Church, invest bishops in realms other than the Empire, and to call for a crusade.

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<sup>82</sup> Richard Cocke, "Doge Agostino Barbarigo and the Image of Cyprus," *Zeitschrift Für Kunstgeschichte*, January 1, 2004. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20474259>.

<sup>83</sup> "Ferdinand I | King of Two Sicilies, Reformer, Enlightened Despot | Britannica," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ferdinand-I-king-of-Naples>.

<sup>84</sup> "The Death of Alexander VI, 1503," *Eyewitness to History*, 2007. <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/alexanderVI.htm>.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

## Piero de' Medici

As the eldest son of Lorenzo de' Medici, Piero is now the Signoria of Florence, responsible for the defense and prosperity of his city state. Piero faces many internal struggles and challenges, namely the rise of the republicans and his own family, who vie to usurp him. In particular, the radical cult leader Savonarola reprimands his reign, and his cries for a return to a democratic republic are beginning to be spread and echoed by the Florentine people.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, members of a cadet branch of the Medici are also in support of this increasingly popular revolt. Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici, the leader of this branch, was disregarded and humiliated by Lorenzo de' Medici and, thus, seeks to destroy the main branch of the house. In addition to these domestic crises, Florence also finds itself without strong military allies, with the suzerainty of Milan slipping away and the papacy falling under a hostile dynasty. Thus, Piero must work to resolve his conflicts with the people and nobility of Florence and find strong allies abroad to protect the city.

## Girolamo Savonarola

Possibly one of the most interesting and radical characters of the Renaissance era, Savonarola is a fiery and revolutionary Dominican preacher. Despite enjoying the patronage and protection of Lorenzo de' Medici, Savonarola has no desire to work with the family of Florence after his death and openly denounces their corruption and consolidation of power, renouncing their monetary support and standing firmly against them.<sup>88</sup> He also despises the corruption and debauchery of the Church and decries their vanity. While he holds no legitimate political office or any diplomatic power, he does lead a fervent cult of militant followers, known as the Piagnoni, from all over Northern Italy. He seeks to expand by taking over Florence. Savonarola does favour compromise and would be willing to work with other statesmen and leaders should foreign nations threaten Italy.<sup>89</sup>

## Ludovico Sforza

Descendant of the legendary mercenary captain Francesco I Sforza, Ludovico is an ambitious and cunning man, with aspirations of officially leading the Milanese duchy. As the Milanese regent, he rules in place of the young duke Gian Galeazzo, from whom he has seized the reins of power.<sup>90</sup> As a result, Ludovico has absolute control over the city-state's politics, and has effectively exiled his former liege, Galeazzo, from Milan. With this new wealth and control, he engages in pharaonic projects such as the expansion of the Cathedral of Milan, with the aim of elevating Milan to the top of the European social pyramid. However, before he can achieve his lofty goal, he must legitimize his reign by seeking formal recognition of his claim to the Milanese title. Therefore, Ludovico must gain the approval of the emperor and must organize a coronation, preferably involving the pope. The major challenge that Ludovico faces on his path to seizing the throne is the interference of Ferdinand I of Naples, who supports the legitimate heir Gian Galeazzo due to Ferdinand's desire to counterbalance the influence of the Sforza. Moreover, the French seem increasingly willing to use force to bring the Sforza tributary of Genoa back

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<sup>87</sup> Richard C. Trexler, "Lorenzo De' Medici and Savonarola, Martyrs for Florence," *Renaissance Quarterly* 31, 1978. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2860227>.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Alfredo Bosio, "Ludovico Sforza | Duke of Milan," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, May 23, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ludovico-Sforza>.

under the French sphere.<sup>91</sup> Ludovico Sforza must use his strong diplomatic instincts and military eye to defend Milan and himself from threats domestic and abroad.

### **Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici**

Lorenzo heads the cadet branch of the Medici, commonly known as the Popolani Branch. Having been denied political office and exploited for their wealth by Lorenzo the Magnificent, these subsidiaries of the Medici hold a strong grudge against the main branch.<sup>92</sup> Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco, despite having been suppressed, still holds considerable wealth and political power. He has a strong alliance with the radical friar Savonarola and would support any action to restore his family's power and prestige.<sup>93</sup> However, given that Florence will almost inevitably come under the threat of foreign dominion soon, it would seem prudent for Lorenzo to seek compromise with the main branch of the house and join forces to dissuade invasion.

### **Ascanio Sforza**

Brother of Ludovico Sforza, Ascanio found his career in the Church, and by 1492, he had been appointed a cardinal, with great influence over the matters of the Church, as well as over the papal finances, and Curia.<sup>94</sup> With strong ties to his family and especially his brother Ludovico, Ascanio will work closely with them to further their interests in the Duchy of Milan. In addition, he is also a close ally and friend of Pope Alexander VI and also a contact of Ferdinand I. As a result of this vast network of connections, Ascanio will play a crucial role in tying together a potential Italian alliance to deter foreign powers.

### **Ludovico II of Saluzzo**

As the Marquis of Saluzzo, Ludovico II rules the city as its sole leader, with full control over the city's resources, albeit small compared to other cities. His real power stems from his connections with the French throne, having built a defensive alliance with Charles VII to protect Saluzzo from the militarily dominant Savoyards.<sup>95</sup> In respect to his strategic position, the small state of Saluzzo is very much isolated from the rest of Italy, nestled between France and Savoy. This does, however, give him the opportunity to act as an intermediary between the French and Italians. As a result, an Italian military conflict with France would likely destroy Saluzzo, and Ludovico would much rather preserve peace and avoid conflict with France as much as possible.

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<sup>91</sup> Paul Coles, "The Crisis of Renaissance Society Genoa 1488-1507," *Past & Present* 17, 1957. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/649739>.

<sup>92</sup> "Lorenzo Di Pierfrancesco De' Medici – the Medici Family," *The Medici Family*, n.d. <https://themedicifamily.com/lorenzo-di-pierfrancesco-de-medici>.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Fausto Pace, "Ascanio Sforza | Palazzo Sforza Cesarini," n.d. <https://www.palazzosforzacesarini.it/en/ascanio-sforza-en/>.

<sup>95</sup> Gregory Lubkin, *A Renaissance Court* (Univ of California Press, 1994).

## **Pandolfo Petrucci**

Petrucci is a powerful politician in the Republic of Siena, a historical rival of the Republic of Florence. By 1492, he had elevated himself to have almost complete political control over the struggling republic.<sup>96</sup> Managing a state under a much larger and powerful neighbor, Petrucci must use his diplomatic skills to find powerful allies, preferably those less amicable to the Republic of Florence. An extraordinarily ambitious man, his goals during the coming conflict will ultimately revolve around reconstructing and projecting his republic into an Italian power once more.

## **Paolo di Campofregoso**

The former ruler of Genoa, Paolo di Campofregoso is now a cardinal and archbishop of Genoa. Although he no longer holds any real political authority in Genoa, he holds immense symbolic power over the citizens as the last ruler of the city and will play a crucial role in determining its future, should the former republic be reestablished.<sup>97</sup> With strong allies in the Church and deep connections with the Neapolitans, di Campofregoso would be a powerful ally to any seeking to bring the Republic of Genoa under their control.

## **Ercole I d'Este**

The Duke of Ferrara, d'Este has been at the centre of Italian politics for over two decades, fighting against the papacy as well as the Venetians during the Treaty of Lodi. Using his diplomatic skills, he defused the military conflict; however, this came at the expense of making enemies out of two of the most powerful players on the Italian peninsula, with much animosity still lingering between d'Este, Rome, and Venice.<sup>98</sup> For this reason, d'Este must court alliances with powers that can protect his duchy. Despite these injustices, he is still willing to take a conciliatory stance towards his former enemies if it means securing his future.

## **Francesco II Gonzaga**

Gonzaga is the ruler of the small commune of Mantua, but his true skill and occupation lies on the battlefield, serving as a mercenary general. Currently under the employ of Venice to lead their mainland expansion, he is one of the most brilliant and successful generals in Italy. Through his experiences as a *condottiero* (mercenary captain), he built strong connections with rulers all over Italy, including marital ties with the Duke of Ferrara.<sup>99</sup> Combined with his excellent reputation as a military leader, Gonzaga will undoubtedly be a crucial part of any military conflict against foreign invasion.

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<sup>96</sup> "Pandolfo Petrucci | Italian Renaissance, Siena, Tyranny | Britannica," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d.  
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Pandolfo-Petrucci>.

<sup>97</sup> Christine Shaw, "Principles and Practice in the Civic Government of Fifteenth-Century Genoa," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 2005.  
<https://doi.org/10.1353/ren.2008.0666>.

<sup>98</sup> "House of Este | Italian Renaissance, Politics & Art | Britannica," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d.  
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/House-of-Este#ref47223>.

<sup>99</sup> "Gonzaga Dynasty | Italian Rulers, Renaissance Art & Culture | Britannica," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d.  
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Gonzaga-dynasty#ref130373>.

## Guidobaldo da Montefeltro

The Duke of Urbino and renowned *condottiero*, Montefeltro is a skilled warrior and administrator. He leads a significant amount of soldiers and is one of the most prominent mercenaries in Italy. Moreover, Montefeltro has connections to some of the most powerful men in Italy, including the pope. In order to maximize the chances of survival for his state and himself, we will need to find stable employment under a powerful leader.<sup>100</sup>

## Cesare Borgia

Currently a cardinal appointed by his father Pope Alexander VI, Borgia has grander ambitions than to serve in the clergy. While he is still trapped in his father's shadow, Borgia has aspirations of ruling his own Italian states, and dreams of becoming a *condottiero* to achieve his vision. Borgia has vast connections to the papacy and has the monetary resources needed to form his own mercenary company. All he lacks to establish his own fiefdom is a conflict. As a result, Borgia is likely to act as an opportunist, building up his mercenary army and waiting for a suitable employer who he can work with to solidify his dream.<sup>101</sup>

## Giuliano della Rovere

A veteran of the Church, della Rovere has served in many roles for Rome, acting as a military leader, ambassador, and now cardinal. However, the election of Pope Alexander VI over himself has left della Rovere furious with the Sforza faction which colluded with Alexander. Due to this perceived injustice, della Rovere is likely to act as a central figure in an opposition against the Sforza and Borgia, with him already reaching out to the French to help him defeat his enemies.<sup>102</sup>

## Galeazzo Sanseverino

A renowned and experienced *condottiero*, Sanseverino has been in the employ of dukes and princes all across Italy. His current contract brings him under the leadership of the Sforza of Milan, and his considerable knowledge, battlefield prowess, and soldiers will likely lead him to play a crucial role in any Milanese conflict. In terms of his personal goals, Sanseverino is a career *condottiero* and would like to seek the most profitable role with little interest in politics. In addition, he weighs his personal morals and alliances very lightly, and would much rather make career decisions that ensure he finds the most powerful employer.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> "Montefeltro Family | Duke of Urbino, Renaissance Italy, papal States | Britannica," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Montefeltro-family#ref59723>.

<sup>101</sup> Mallett, M. Edward. "Cesare Borgia," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 3, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Cesare-Borgia>.

<sup>102</sup> Kühner, H.. "Julius II," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 11, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Julius-II>.

<sup>103</sup> Alfredo Bosio, "Ludovico Sforza | Duke of Milan," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, May 23, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ludovico-Sforza>.

## Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba

Córdoba is a highly experienced Spanish mercenary and is almost certain to be leading any Spanish expedition or intervention in Italy. As the military leader of a possible Spanish presence in Italy, he would have considerable autonomy to make his own decisions under the wishes of the Spanish government. Personally, Córdoba likely wishes to carve out his own realm, preferably serving as a duke under only nominal control of Spain.<sup>104</sup>

## Gian Giacomo Trivulzio

A veteran *condottiero* of Italy, Trivulzio has served under leaders across the peninsula. His influence, allies, and connections allowed him to elevate to a very powerful position. With this, Trivulzio seeks to use his vast military assets and prowess to solidify his assets and find a permanent employer who will grant him land and a noble title.

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## Giovanni di Pierfrancesco de' Medici

Along with his brother Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici, Giovanni serves as one of the heads of the republican forces allied against Piero de' Medici. His connections with Savonrola and the French throne placed him at the centre of a potential popular revolt against the Medici. Should the republicans overthrow Piero, he will become the new leader of Florence. As a result, his personal interests mainly revolve around the consolidation of republican forces in Florence.<sup>106</sup>

## Discussion Questions

1. With the end of the Treaty of Lodi, what will become of the balance of power in Italy?
2. Should the Florentine government listen to the people and depose the Medici rulers?
3. What is the future of Genoa, a much-maligned republic under foreign control? Should it become independent or continue to be a Milanese protectorate?
4. What will happen to the competing claims on the Neapolitan throne? Who will succeed in taking the position?
5. How can the Italian states unite against foreign threats? Who and how will this be organized and led?
6. What will the relationship between Italy and the Holy Roman Empire be?

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<sup>104</sup> "Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 28, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Gonzalo-Fernandez-de-Cordoba>.

<sup>105</sup> "Trivulzio, Gian Giacomo, Detto Il Magno Nell'Enciclopedia Treccani," *Treccani*, n.d. <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/trivulzio-gian-giacomo-detto-il-magno>.

<sup>106</sup> "Lorenzo Di Pierfrancesco De' Medici – the Medici Family," *The Medici Family*, n.d. <https://themedicifamily.com/lorenzo-di-pierfrancesco-de-medici>.

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