

Historical Committee



The Fall of the Roman Empire

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History of the Committee

The scope of historical discourse often forgets to set its eye on events further back than the 15th century. While it is undeniable that these recent occurrences rightfully receive adequate attention and are vital in shaping our current society, it is of great importance that the world recognizes that historical phenomena from before the 15th century are equally significant in comprehending the intricacy of our present-day reality. In response to this imperative, the Historical Committee in BAMUN XXIV is




embarking on an exploration of our world's ancient past. On this occasion, the committee will be venturing into the fall of the Roman Empire. The focus of the debate will be settled on the arrival of the Germanic tribes and how both sides of the Empire tried to keep standing, a notable episode that changed the organization of Europe as a whole.

Introduction

When talking about the fall of the Roman Empire, focus is shifted toward the Western side of the Empire. This is due to the fact that the Eastern Empire is now referred to as the



Byzantine Empire and didn't cease to exist until around one thousand years later. However, BAMUN XXIV's Historical Committee will focus on both Empires and how external presences were handled differently.



This committee will analyze the complex relationships that developed between the Eastern and Western Empires, as well as the strategies and intentions of the Germanic tribes. Critical decisions that may have an extended effect or accelerate the fall of the Roman Empire will also be discussed. Focus will be settled on the treatment of Germanic tribes upon first arrival, the first settlements of these tribes, their rebellion, adaptation to their presence, and final treaties.

Germanic tribes arrived in Rome looking to expand their territories as their population had recently had a growth spurt. They wanted to invade territories on both sides of the Empire, however, the Eastern Empire had a better consolidation and knew how to properly handle the situation, while the Western Empire was facing economic struggles and a dissatisfied population. After several negotiations things seemed to settle down, but Germanic tribes ended up rebelling and attacking Roman territories once again. It is crucial for both sides of the Empire to adapt to the German presence in Rome and to create final treaties that won't be broken.

Delegates should analyze the context behind this arrival to properly handle the issue in hand. It is important for delegates to keep in mind how the events truly went down but also to remember that the committee will not follow the reality of these events and that - after a certain point in history - the course of history will be completely opened to alterations based on the delegates' actions.

Historical Context

The Roman Empire, once a symbol of unparalleled power and unity, now faces an existential crisis. With Germanic tribes progressing persistently, the Western Roman Empire is collapsing quickly and losing power. Beyond simple raiding, the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, and Vandals have thoroughly established their own areas inside Roman territory, becoming a direct threat to the integrity and governance of the Empire.



Even though the Eastern Roman Empire has a better organization than the Western Roman Empire, it is still vulnerable to these chaotic influences. Due to these complicated diplomatic connections, Zeno - emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire at the time - is looking to protect his nation from German assaults. Choosing to support Theodoric the Great, leader of the Ostrogoths, Emperor Zeno demonstrated balancing the need to handle the changing of power dynamics in the west while still maintaining eastern influence.



It is written down in history that Romulus Augustulus, the final Roman emperor, was overthrown in 476 AD by Odoacer, a Germanic chieftain in charge of the foederati¹; dissatisfied German mercenaries with promises of territory and benefits that never came true. These soldiers united around Odoacer, who took control on September 476 AD. Odoacer offered military support to Rome in return for subsidies and land grants.

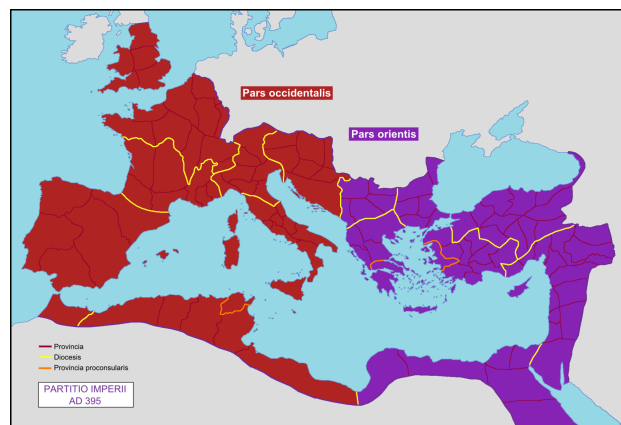
4, 476 AD. He proclaimed himself King of the Western Roman Empire rather than the imperial title, bringing an end to the Western Roman Empire and establishing Germanic authority ([Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopedia, 2024](#)).


Odoacer worked with the Roman Senate to preserve the Roman administrative structure in an effort to stabilize the nation ([Mark, 2014](#)). He retained continuity with Roman customs and incorporated Roman institutions into his reign. Nonetheless, he kept an indifferent attitude to the orthodox Christian church regardless of his Arian convictions.

However, his growing influence alarmed Eastern Roman Emperor Zeno, who supported Theoderic the Great and the Ostrogoths to challenge Odoacer. When Theoderic invaded in 489 AD, sparking years of conflict ended with Odoacer's defeat. After a tense truce, Theoderic betrayed and murdered Odoacer at a banquet on March 15, 493 AD, solidifying Ostrogothic dominance over the territory and definitively ending Roman authority in the West ([Schmandt, 2018](#)).

Current Issue

As Rome expanded its territory, the cost of maintaining the vast Empire became too high. Looking for a solution, Emperor Diocletian split the Roman Empire into two halves; the Eastern Roman Empire and the Western Roman Empire. It was believed that if there were two different administrations problems would vanish, but due to internal conflicts related to





cultural disagreements and economic disparities between both sides of the Empire and external pressures by foreign tribes, Rome became very vulnerable to collapse ([Appleton, 2023](#)). Now, in 410 AD, with the arrival of Germanic tribes and the sack of Rome, both sides of the Empire have become even more exposed to catastrophes, leading them to their actual position ([Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024](#)). Currently, both Empires need to take action against Germans to defend their territory and Germanic tribes are creating plans to successfully invade Roman lands looking for new territories and wealth.

Stages of the Debate

I. Migration Period

a. Western Private Session

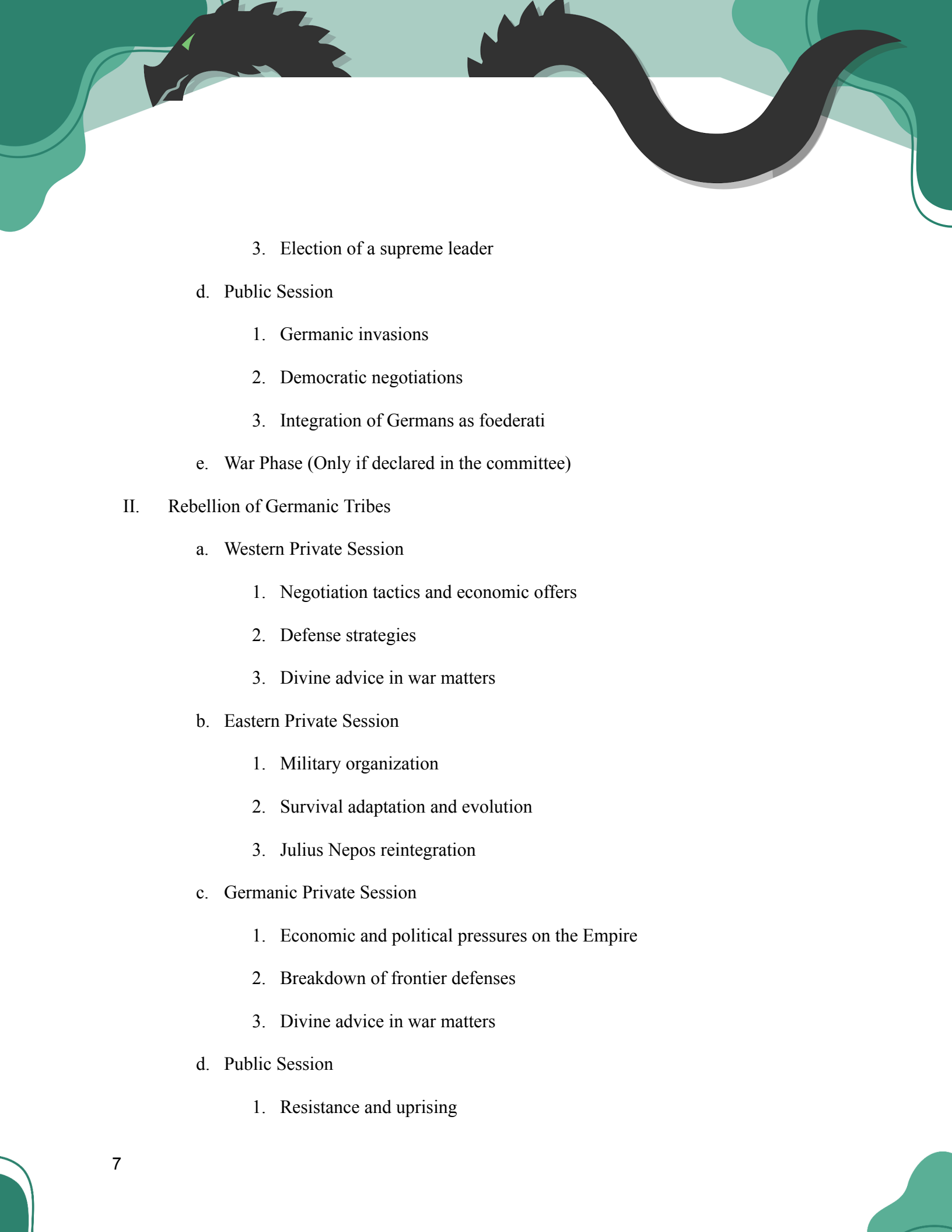
1. Orestes rise against Julius Nepos
2. New Emperor of the West Empire
3. Diplomatic approach towards German tribes


b. Eastern Private Session

1. Internal governance and strategic defense
2. Fortification of the Empire
3. Understandment of German motivations

c. Germanic Private Session

1. Arrival route and territorial expansion
2. Early settlements of Germanic tribes

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- A decorative illustration of a dragon's head and long, flowing tail in dark green and black, set against a light green background with white, cloud-like shapes.
- 3. Election of a supreme leader
 - d. Public Session
 - 1. Germanic invasions
 - 2. Democratic negotiations
 - 3. Integration of Germans as foederati
 - e. War Phase (Only if declared in the committee)
 - II. Rebellion of Germanic Tribes
 - a. Western Private Session
 - 1. Negotiation tactics and economic offers
 - 2. Defense strategies
 - 3. Divine advice in war matters
 - b. Eastern Private Session
 - 1. Military organization
 - 2. Survival adaptation and evolution
 - 3. Julius Nepos reintegration
 - c. Germanic Private Session
 - 1. Economic and political pressures on the Empire
 - 2. Breakdown of frontier defenses
 - 3. Divine advice in war matters
 - d. Public Session
 - 1. Resistance and uprising



2. Religious conversion

e. War Phase (Mandatory)

III. The Future of the Empire

a. Western Private Session

1. Selection of new leader
2. Adaptation to German presence

b. Eastern Private Session

1. Ostrogoth alliance
2. Treatment of Germanic people
3. Conflict with Italy


c. Germanic Private Session

1. Defense strategies against the east Empire
2. Settlement and integration of tribes
3. Proclamation of king

d. War Phase (Mandatory)

IV. German and Roman Unification

a. Public Session

1. Reconciliation and diplomatic initiatives
 2. Germanic adaptation to Christianity
 3. Socio-political organization of the Empire
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A decorative illustration of a dragon's head and tail in dark green and black, positioned at the top of the page. The dragon's head is on the left, and its tail is on the right, both facing towards the center.


Positions

Western Roman Empire: The Western Roman Empire first tried to diplomatically approach Germanic tribes, but this wasn't successful. They started to build extensive border fortifications including Hadrian's wall. They then attempted to adapt Germanic tribes to Roman culture and religion.

1. Romulus Augustulus - Last Western Roman Emperor.
2. Orestes - Father of Romulus Augustulus, former Roman general.
3. Glycerius - Briefly Western Roman Emperor before Romulus.
4. Ricimer - Powerful general and kingmaker in the Western Roman Empire.
5. Syagrius - Roman general and ruler of the Domain of Soissons.
6. Aegidius - Predecessor to Syagrius in Gaul.
7. Severinus of Noricum - Christian saint influential in Noricum and Pannonia.
8. Avitus - Western Roman Emperor with military and political challenges.
9. Majorian - Western Roman Emperor noted for his military campaigns.
10. Anthemius - Western Roman Emperor with connections to the Eastern court.


Eastern Roman Empire: The Eastern Roman Empire was quick to fortify their cities and towns as well as adjusted their territorial boundaries to prevent Germanic invasions. Diplomatic realtions and alliances were formed between the Eastern Empire and Germanic tribes, but the Empire still maintained strong military forces.

1. Zeno - Eastern Roman Emperor from 474-491.

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- A decorative illustration of a dark grey dragon with a spiky back and tail, winding across the top of the page. The dragon is set against a light green background with darker green wavy shapes representing water or foliage.
2. Anastasius I - Successor to Zeno, Emperor from 491-518.
 3. Basiliscus - Usurper and rival to Zeno who briefly ruled.
 4. Illus - General and supporter of Zeno.
 5. Armatus - General and nephew of Basiliscus, later supported Zeno.
 6. Verina - Empress and key political figure, mother-in-law to Zeno.
 7. Ariadne - Zeno's wife and daughter of Emperor Leo I.
 8. Julius Nepos - Last Western Roman Emperor to be recognized by the East Empire.
 9. Cassiodorus - Roman statesman and writer, served Theodoric.

Germanic Delegations: The Germanic Tribes, including the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals, and Franks arrived in Rome, attracted by their wealth and riches, looking for new territories to expand to due to their population growth and need of resources. They sought to conquer territories and establish their own power bases.

1. Odoacer - Germanic chieftain, deposed Romulus Augustulus and ruled Italy.
2. Alaric II - King of the Visigoths, involved in conflicts with the Romans.
3. Theodoric the Great - King of the Ostrogoths.
4. Clovis I - King of the Franks, founder of the Merovingian dynasty.
5. Gundobad - King of the Burgundians, played a role in Western Roman politics.
6. Euric - King of the Visigoths, expanded his kingdom significantly.
7. Childeric I - King of the Salian Franks, father of Clovis I.
8. Geiseric - King of the Vandals, known for the sack of Rome in 455.

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9. Sigismund - Son of Gundobad, King of the Burgundians after him.
 10. Theodemir - Father of Theodoric the Great, leader of the Ostrogoths.

Guiding Questions

- Where is my character from?
- Who are my character's allies? Who is my character opposing?
- What key events should my character prioritize to address?
- How can my actions and decisions change the future of the Roman Empire?

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