

FACTION BRIEFING: ROMAN SENATE



Representation of the Roman Senate, Cicero denounces Catiline, from a 19th-century fresco by Cesare Maccari, public domain.

Historic Context

The Roman Senate (*Senatus Romanus*) was a powerful and prestigious governing and advisory assembly in ancient Rome. After the fall of the Roman Republic, the constitutional balance of power shifted from the Roman Senate to the Roman Emperor. As such, membership in the Senate was sought for prestige rather than power.

The residual powers of the Senate included appointing the commander of a legion in Africa, holding governorships in pacified provinces, and jurisdiction over criminal trials. After an Emperor's death, the Senate might deify them, or sometimes pass a decree of *damnatio memoriae* (damnation from memory) to encourage everyone to forget their reign. As the constitution established by Emperor Augustus did not have a clear succession mechanic, the Senate played a role in legitimising the reign of new Emperors. On rare occasions, the Senate even elected an Emperor.

The Senate is a stronghold of traditional religious sentiment and conservative political views. While the Senate does now include aristocrats from outside of Italia, it has been challenged by the rise of Emperors with humble backgrounds, such as the provincial peasant Maximinus Thrax (r. 235 to 238 CE), and the current Emperor, Philip the Arab (r. 244 to 249 CE) from the province of Syria.

This was an era of diminished influence for the Roman Senate. With Emperors spending more time away from Rome on military affairs, there are fewer opportunities for the Senators to be influential friends of the Emperor. The historic outcome saw the Senate stripped of its residual military roles.

History is a series of contingent events, however, so in this megagame the Senate may be able to maintain or improve its position within the Roman Empire.

Player Goals

While individual Senators may harbour secret ambitions, all Senators share the following goals:

- Own as much land as possible;
- Become Consul at least once;
- Avoid bankruptcy;
- Rome must not be sacked!

Faction Goals

The Senate is conservative and largely desires to preserve the status quo, while avoiding the attention of Emperors who are jealous of the prestige or wealth of individual senators. In particular the Senate desires:

- Maintain or increase the authority and power of the Senate;
- Retention of Senators in military command roles;
- Preservation of the borders and unity of the Roman Empire;
- The Empire should not pay tribute to Barbarians;
- As few reforms to the structure of imperial government as possible.

Design Note

In order for the game to be fun for the players in the Senate, the power of the Senate has been increased above what it had in the third century.

Senator Roles

During the game, Senators will rotate between participating in the business of the Senate in Rome, and exercising command in the provinces, either as a Legate in charge of legions, or as a Dux acting as the leader of a regional team.

Depending on the number of players in the game, one or more Senators in Rome will be sent off to the provinces at the start of a game round, while a matching number of Senators will be recalled to Rome.

Senators start with a **d4** Military die, and a **d6** Political die.

Consul

Two Senators will be Consul each game round. One Consul is elected by the Senate, the other is appointed by the Emperor. The Consuls act as the joint faction leader for the Senate. In the event of disagreement, the two Consuls roll their political dice, and the highest roll wins.

Senator Characters

All Senate characters start with a d4 military die, and a d6 political die, three *latifunda* estates, and 5 Wealth Points (WP). Your estates provide an income of 3 WP per game round, which can be collected from Treasury Control. Treasury Control will auction a few *latifunda* each game round to the highest bidder.

Senators are not allowed to dirty their hands and honour with commerce. In order to invest in trade, you must find an Equestrian player willing to act as your intermediary with Treasury Control.

Senate Resources

The Senate has a fixed RP income of 6 RP at the start of the game and a variable income of 1d4 RP. The Senate can mint coins for an extra 1d4 RP, but this may trigger inflation.

The Senate has influence rather than authority. Apart from one legion in Africa, your only directly controlled military forces are emergency militia or gladiators, who can be of some use in repelling small barbarian warbands. When deployed, these tokens only remain on the map for one game round, but they can be deployed in the Move Phase, before battles are resolved, unlike all other tokens that are placed on the map during the Policy Phase (after battles are finished).

Rome

The Emperor has substantial military forces in or close to Rome, including the Praetorian Guard, bodyguard cavalry, the *Legio Parthica III*, marines from nearby naval bases, and the paramilitary urban cohorts. Attempting to overthrow the Emperor with military force is likely to fail badly.

The people of Rome are prone to rioting, especially if there is a shortage of grain from Egypt. In general, the Roman mob is not as influential as it was during the days of the Roman Republic. With Roman Emperors spending more and more time dealing with military crises on the frontiers, they are spending less time on the problems of Rome.

Africa

The Senate has control of a legion in Africa. There are occasional troubles with brigands and nomadic raiders in Africa, which would increase if the garrison was withdrawn for use elsewhere.

