

## The Cognac Strategic Conclave

**Agenda:** The Italian Renaissance Wars: The Defence of the Italian City-States  
Against the Spanish-Habsburg Alliance

**Freeze Date:** September 1st, 1526

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Italy shudders as the winds of change blow strongly through, threatening to tip over as her fate balances precariously on a knife's edge. As the forces of **The Holy Roman Emperor Charles V** gather in the north, the land of Julius Caesar and Marcus Aurelius fears being overrun by the Empire bearing its name and the onus for its defence now lies with the **Cognac Strategic Conclave**; a shaky alliance formed on the foundation of necessity, not trust.

The League convenes in the wake of The Holy Roman Empire's demolition of the French might at Pavia, the Habsburgs now boasting control of both Milan and Naples. The French Army, which once threatened to invade all of Italy is now, its protector. With Italy's fate resting on so unlikely a shield, the Conclave is the last line of defense against the Habsburgs' domination of Europe. Should the Conclave fail, the last barrier between a fractured Italy and an era of unbridled power for the Habsburg Empire will collapse.

Foreign powers circle, looking for an opportunity such as the one that the **Ottomans took advantage of to** wound the Empire at the battle of Mohacs as **King Henry VIII** looked on with feigned detachment. It falls to you to decide if the devil you know is better than the devil you don't. Simultaneously, Charles' presence looms, biding his time and waiting for his armies to ring the death knell for Italy in a bid to provoke missteps and division from within the Conclave itself. The air is heavy with suspicion and intrigue; rumours of treachery swirl as the Conclave convenes here on the eve of a historic conflict which will have definitive consequences for the future of Europe.

The Conclave assembles at the behest of Pope Clement VII and comprises the states of France, Venice, Milan, Florence and the Papal States. The League's prominent figures include **King Francis**, humiliated at Pavia and coerced into the Treaty of Madrid, eager for vengeance but lacking the strength to challenge Charles directly; the mercurial **Pope Clement VII** attempting to hold the league together but doing so only out of desperation, not goodwill; **Francesco II Sforza**, Duke of Milan only in name, while his city is controlled by the Imperial Army; and the **Doge of Venice**, Andrea Gritti, a pragmatist whose loyalties are shaped less by an abstract ideal of Italy and more by the cold calculus of Venetian commerce.

As delegates, you will assume the roles of rulers, nobles and generals & must consider your personal allegiances and ambitions in addition to the overarching conflict. Alliances will be formed and broken, battles will be fought, and crises will be abundant as you strive to formulate the **Corex Bellorum**. Remember that every decision you take has an indelible impact.

The bards will sing about this for millennia to come. What do you wish to be remembered as? The noble alliance which defended Italy against all odds, or the ineffective posturers who squabbled as Rome fell into ruin? Delegates, your mettle will be forged in the crucible of war. Act, or succumb to the verdict of history.

