

BALMUN'26

JCC
STUDY GUIDE

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BALMUN'26 JCC:THE SECOND CRUSADE STUDY GUIDE

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1. Letter From the Secretary-General

Esteemed Participants of BALMUN'26,

It is my utmost pleasure to welcome you to this year's annual session of BALMUN. It is truly an honour to host a platform where passionate minds gather to engage in a meaningful debate, diplomacy, and cooperation. BALMUN is not merely a conference; it is a created space where ideas are challenged, and perspectives are broadened.

My journey in this club began on the day that I stepped into this school. I started as a bot delegate, continued as an academic assistant, and now stand proudly as the Secretary General of this year's annual session. Our team has been working meticulously to ensure that this MUN offers not only a rigorous academic experience but also an inspiring and memorable one. We have overcome plenty of different challenges, but all of them have made us stronger than ever to mark our target. We have poured relentless effort into this conference.

With a highly dedicated academic and organizational team, we proudly present twelve committees, including two General Assembly committees, six Special committees, and four Crisis committees. Each committee is carefully designed to encourage critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. Over the course of three days, you will be able to defend your ideas, listen to opposing views, and seek compromise in the pursuit of meaningful solutions.

I hope that BALMUN'26 serves as a reminder that true leadership lies not in dominance, but in dialogue and not in certainty, but in openness to learning. As the academic and organizational team of BALMUN, we eagerly look forward to witnessing the ideas you will bring to life and the impact you will create throughout the conference.

Your Sincerely,

Kerem Kılıç

Secretary General of BALMUN'26

2. Letter From the Under-Secretary General

Most esteemed Participants, the Academic and the Organization team,

It is my great honor to welcome you to this year's session of BALMUN and to the Second Crusade Joint Crisis Committee. As your Under-Secretary-General, I am excited to see how you navigate the political, economic, and social challenges that shaped the crusade.

The Second Crusade was launched following the fall of Edessa in 1144, which shocked the Christian world and prompted a renewed call to arms from the papacy. As the leaders, nobles, and commanders of your respective factions, you will navigate the political tensions, strategic dilemmas, and shifting alliances that defined this conflict. The success or failure of your side will depend not only on military strength, but also on diplomacy, leadership, and the ability to respond to rapidly changing crises.

I expect you all to read this study guide and do your own separate research before the conference. If you have any questions about the committee, feel free to contact me through my contact information below.

Good luck!

perihan.davison@gmail.com

Perihan Davison
Under Secretary-General of the JCC Committee

3. Introduction to the Committee

This JCC committee will be following the **Crisis Committee procedure**; the committee will be progressing upon the Semi and Unmoderated caucuses, debate will take place in the semi-moderated caucuses according to the board's decision. This committee functions in real time, responding dynamically to unfolding historical events surrounding the **Second Crusade**. In these cabinets, delegates will not represent countries but individual figures each with their own motives, resources, and influence.

Delegates are expected to submit **directives** that outline immediate actions taken by the committee or by individuals to address emerging crises. These may include strategic alliances, intelligence gathering, propaganda efforts, or covert operations.

Communication with the crisis team will occur through directives, allowing delegates to develop backroom strategies, or influence external powers. The crisis staff will continuously introduce new developments, consequences, and dilemmas based on delegates' actions, ensuring that the simulation remains fluid and unpredictable.

Every character will hold the right of taking actions behalf of their own purposes but the cabinets mean working together for success. The success of the committee will depend on the delegates; teamwork, alliances, creativity and of course directives.

4. Key Terms

Crusade: A religious military expedition sanctioned by the papacy, aimed at defending or reclaiming Christian territories.

Indulgence: A remission of sins granted by the Church; crusaders were promised spiritual rewards for participating in the crusade.

Feudalism: A medieval political and social system where land was exchanged for military service and loyalty.

Crusader States: Christian territories established in the Levant after the First Crusade.

Atabeg: A title given to a military governor or regent in the medieval Islamic world.

Jihad: A religiously sanctioned struggle to defend muslim lands (in this context).

Siege Warfare: A military strategy involving surrounding and attacking fortified cities to force surrender.

Pilgrimage: A religious journey to a sacred place, often used to describe crusaders traveling to the Holy Land.

Mercenary: A soldier hired to fight for payment rather than loyalty to a ruler or state.

Holy Land: A term used by Christians to refer to the region around Jerusalem and other sacred sites.

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Papal Bull: An official decree issued by the Pope, often used to announce major decisions such as the call for a crusade.

Vassal: A person who holds land from a lord in return for loyalty and military service.

Relic: A sacred object associated with saints or religious figures, believed to hold spiritual significance.

Dynasty: A line of rulers from the same family controlling a region or state.

Levy: Troops raised by a feudal lord from his vassals or peasants for military campaigns.

5. Background to the Agenda

a. The First Crusade and Its Aftermath

Crusades, military expeditions, beginning in the late 11th century, that were organized by western European Christians in response to centuries of Muslim wars of expansion. Their objectives were to check the spread of Islam, to retake control of the Holy Land in the eastern Mediterranean, to conquer pagan areas, and to recapture formerly Christian territories; they were seen by many of their participants as a means of redemption and expiation for sins. Between 1095, when the First Crusade was launched, and 1291, when the Latin Christians were finally expelled from their kingdom in Syria, there were numerous expeditions to the Holy Land, to Spain, and even to the Baltic; the Crusades continued for several centuries after 1291. Crusading declined rapidly during the 16th century with the advent of the Protestant Reformation and the decline of papal authorities.

The First Crusade succeeded in establishing the "crusader states" of Edessa, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Tripoli in Palestine and Syria (as well as allies along the Crusaders' route, such as the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia). However, there were many who had gone home before reaching Jerusalem, and many who had never left Europe at all. When the success of the crusade became known, these people were mocked and scorned by their families and threatened with excommunication by the Pope. Meanwhile, the establishment of the crusader states in the east helped ease Seljuk pressure on the Byzantine Empire, which had regained some of its Anatolian territory with crusader help, and experienced a period of relative peace and prosperity in the 12th century. The effect on the Muslim dynasties of the east was gradual but important. In the wake of the death of Malik Shah I in 1092, political instability and the division of the Great Seljuq Empire prevented a coherent defence against the Latin states. Cooperation between them remained difficult for many decades, but from Egypt to Syria to Baghdad there were calls for the expulsion of the crusaders, culminating in the recapture of Jerusalem under Saladin later in the century when the Ayyubids had united the surrounding areas.

The success of the crusade inspired the literary imagination of poets in France, who, in the 12th century, began to compose various chansons de geste celebrating the exploits of Godfrey of Bouillon and other crusaders.

b. The Fall of Edessa(1144)

The Second Crusade (1147-1149) was the second major crusade launched from Europe. The Second Crusade was started in response to the fall of the County of Edessa in 1144 to the Seljuk forces of I Imâdüddin Zengi. The County of Edessa was the first of the Crusader states to be established during the First Crusade. It dates from 1098 when Baldwin of Boulogne left the main army of the First Crusade and founded a principality. The fall of the crusader city of Edessa to Seljuq Muslim troops after a siege carried out from November 28 to December 24, 1144, was the spark that ignited the Second Crusade. The victory entrenched Zangi as leader of the Muslims in the Holy Land, a mantle that would be taken up by his son Nür al-Din and then by Saladin. After victory at the Battle of Harran, the Muslim forces in the Holy Land fractured into warring factions.

In 1128, Zangi of Mosul captured Aleppo and cowed neighboring Muslim rulers into submission. In 1144 Zangi learned that Count Joscelin of Edessa had argued with Prince Raymond of Antioch and then taken almost his entire army to Diyarbakir to interfere in a dispute between Seljuq princes. Zangi marched a large army to Edessa, just north of the Syrian border in what is now southwestern Turkey, hoping to overwhelm the city before Joscelin could return. Zangi arrived on November 28 and began battering the walls with trebuchets and mining under the foundations. The city walls were, however, exceptionally strong, and the defenders, most of them mercenaries, put up determined resistance despite their low numbers. Queen Melisende of Jerusalem mustered a relief force that marched for Edessa, but Prince Raymond of Antioch refused to help. On December 24 a section of the walls collapsed into a mine, and Zangi's troops poured into the city, capturing everything except the citadel. Zangi had the local Christians separated from foreign Christians and then had all the latter executed.

The men holding the citadel surrendered on December 26 on condition that their lives be spared. Joscelin and the troops sent by Melisende arrived a few days too late to save Edessa, but they did hold on to the lands west of the Euphrates River. When news of the fall of Edessa reached Rome, Pope Eugene II called for the raising of the Second Crusade. This would greatly strengthen the remaining crusader states, although Edessa was never recaptured.

c. The Call of the Second Crusade

The Second Crusade (1147-1149) was a military campaign organised by the Pope and European nobles to recapture the city of Edessa in Mesopotamia which had fallen in 1144 to the Muslim Seljuk Turks. The Second Crusade also included significant campaigns in the Iberian peninsula and the Baltic against the Muslim Moors and pagan Europeans respectively. Both secondary campaigns were largely successful but the main objective, to free the Latin East from the threat of Muslim

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occupation, would remain unfulfilled, and so further crusades over the next two centuries would be called, all with only marginal successes.

Edessa, located on the edge of the desert of Syria in Upper Mesopotamia, was an important commercial and cultural centre. The city had been in Christian hands since the First Crusade (1095-1102) but it fell to Imad ad-Din Zangi (r. 1127-1146), the Muslim independent ruler of Mosul (in Iraq) and Aleppo (in Syria), on 24 December 1144. Following the capture, which Muslims described as "the victory of victories" (Asbridge, 226), western Christians were killed or sold into slavery while eastern Christians were permitted to remain. Pope Eugenius I (r. 1145-1153) formally called for a crusade (what is now known as the Second Crusade) on the 1st of December 1145. The goals of the campaign were put somewhat vaguely. Neither Edessa nor Zangi was specifically mentioned, rather it was a broad appeal for the achievements of the First Crusade and Christians and holy relics in the Levant to be protected. This lack of a precise aim would have repercussions later in the Crusaders' choice of military targets. The Crusaders were reminded of the urgency of a military response when Nur ad-Din (also spelt Nur al-Din, r. 1146-1174), Zangi's successor after his death in September 1146, defeated the Latin leader Joscelin II's attempt to retake Edessa. Once again the city was sacked to celebrate Nur ad-Din's new power. The Second Crusade, besides Edessa, had additional objectives in Iberia and the Baltic, and both campaigns were backed by the Pope. The Second Crusade was a serious blow to Byzantium's carefully constructed diplomatic alliances, especially with Conrad II against the Normans. The Crusade and Conrad's absence from Europe provided a distraction which allowed the Norman king Roger I of Sicily (r. 1130-1154) the freedom to attack and pillage Kerkyra (Corfu), Euboea, Corinth, and Thebes in 1147. Manuel's attempt to persuade Louis VII to side with him against Roger failed. In 1149 the embarrassment of a Serbian uprising and an attack on the area around Constantinople by George of Antioch's fleet was offset by the Byzantines recapturing Kerkyra. Once again, a crusade had damaged east-west relations.

d. Political Situation in Europe

In Europe, the Second Crusade was initiated by Pope Eugenius II in response to the fall of Edessa. It was notable for being led by two of Europe's most powerful monarchs: King Louis VI of France and Emperor Conrad II of Germany. However, despite the royal leadership, the Crusade suffered from a lack of unified command and conflicting objectives. While the primary goal was to recapture Edessa, other Crusaders also targeted Muslims in Spain and pagans in the Baltic. Furthermore, relations between the Western Crusaders and the Byzantine Empire were strained. Byzantine Emperor Manuel Comnenus was wary of the Crusader armies passing through his territory, fearing they would disrupt his own foreign policy and alliances. This mistrust and the logistical challenges of coordinating large armies across vast distances contributed to the Crusade's overall disarray.

e. Political Situation in the Muslim World

The Muslim world at this time was not a unified entity. Following the death of Zangi, the powerful Muslim leader who had captured Edessa, his territories were divided between his sons. His elder son, Sayf al-Din Ghazi, inherited Mosul and Mesopotamia, while his younger son, Nur al-Din, took control of Aleppo and Edessa. This division created opportunities for internal conflict and weakened the overall Muslim resistance against the Crusaders. Nur al-Din, however, proved to be a formidable leader who consolidated power and posed a significant threat to the Crusader states. The ruler of Damascus, Unur, fearing Nur al-Din's growing power, was even willing to cooperate with the Crusaders, a move that ultimately backfired and led to the disastrous Siege of Damascus.

6. Major Campaigns

a. The German Campaign

The German campaign of the Second Crusade was led by Conrad III of Germany. After the fall of the county of Edessa in 1144, European rulers responded to the papal call for a crusade issued by Pope Eugene III. German knights, aristocrats, and royal levies made up the majority of Conrad III's sizable army. The army started its march toward the Holy Land in 1147, passing through Byzantine Empire territory.

The crusaders travelled via Constantinople, where tensions existed with Manuel I Komnenos, the Byzantine Emperor. The Byzantines insisted that the crusaders advance swiftly into Anatolia because they were wary of the sizable crusader army passing through their territory. The German army moved into Seljuk Turk lands after entering Asia Minor.

The effort soon ran into major problems. The crusader force suffered from inadequate supply lines, starvation, and fatigue in addition to being unfamiliar with the terrain. By ambushing crusader units and denying them access to resources, Seljuk soldiers employed successful hit-and-run tactics. The German army was defeated in the vicinity of Dorylaeum in October 1147. The remaining men were forced to flee toward Byzantine territory after a significant portion of Conrad's army was killed or dispersed. The crusade was severely undermined by this early setback, which also illustrated the difficulties European soldiers had in Anatolia.

b. The French Campaign

Louis VII of France was in charge of the French campaign. Many French aristocrats and knights joined the crusade after being moved by religious sermons

from leaders like Bernard of Clairvaux. Shortly after the German soldiers left Europe, Louis VII's army travelled through Byzantine territory in a similar manner.

Relations with the Byzantine Empire were complex, much like with the German crusaders. Emperor Manuel I Komnenos was concerned that the crusader forces may try to conquer land or pose a challenge to Byzantine rule. Because of this, Byzantine authorities kept a careful eye on the crusaders and urged them to advance swiftly into imperial territory.

As the French army advanced across Anatolia, it also encountered significant logistical challenges. Communication and supplies were severely strained during the lengthy trip. Unfamiliar terrain, severe weather, and frequent attacks by Seljuk forces all presented challenges for the crusaders. The army became disorganised at various times, and many troops perished in ambushes. A fraction of the French army eventually made it to the eastern Mediterranean by sea and regrouped in the Crusader States in spite of these obstacles.

c. The Council of Acre

The remaining European Crusader armies arrived in the eastern Mediterranean by 1148, at which point they started working with the leaders of the Crusader States. The next strategic goal of the crusade was decided at a significant gathering called the Council of Acre. Local elites from the Crusader States and European authorities like Louis VII and Conrad III attended the council.

The leaders discussed potential military targets during the discussion. The fall of Edessa had served as the initial reason for the crusade, but the city was now firmly under Muslim rule and was thought to be difficult to retake. Rather, focus turned to other significant cities in the area.

The council resolved to assault Damascus after deliberation and compromise. Even the crusaders disagreed with the decision. In order to oppose other regional powers, Damascus had previously maintained comparatively friendly relations with the Kingdom of Jerusalem. But because of its richness, location and power in the area, the city was also strategically significant. Some leaders believe that seizing Damascus would increase crusader authority in the Levant.

d. The Siege of Damascus

The Second Crusade's main military action was the assault on Damascus. Together with armies from the Crusader States, European crusader forces advanced against the city in July of 1148. Damascus was both a great prize and a challenging target because it was a significant political, economic, and cultural hub in the area.

The crusaders first approached the city from the west, where gardens and orchards offered some resources and security. Damascus' defenders, however, put up a fierce fight and managed to maintain their defensive positions. Internal disputes concerning tactics and authority over the city in the event of its capture also plagued the crusaders' leadership.

The crusader force made a strategic error by shifting to the opposite side of the city within a few days. The lack of natural cover and water in this new area made it more challenging for the crusader to hold their siege. In the meantime, Muslim troops from nearby areas started organising to support Damascus' defences.

After just a few days, the crusaders were compelled to leave the siege due to mounting pressure, logistical challenges, and internal strife. The Second Crusade's pivotal moment was the defeat at Damascus. Many European armies departed from the area after this setback, and the crusade eventually came to an end without accomplishing its main goals.

7. Military Structure and Capabilities

a. Christian Forces

Despite an army of 60,000 and the presence of two western kings, the crusade was not successful in the Levant and caused further tension between the Byzantine Empire and the west. The Crusade was led by the German king Conrad I (r. 1138-1152) and Louis VII, the king of France (r. 1137-1180). It was the first time that kings had personally led a crusader force. In the early summer of 1147 the army marched across Europe to Constantinople, and from there to the Levant where the French and German troops were joined by Italians, northern Europeans, and more French crusaders who had sailed rather than travelled by land. The Crusader army that marched to attack Damascus comprised approximately 30,000 men. However, they suffered heavy losses during their arduous journey to Jerusalem at the hands of the Seljuq Turks.

During the siege itself, the exact number of Crusader losses is unknown, but it was substantial enough to lead to their withdrawal.

b. Muslim Forces

The Muslim forces defending Damascus were estimated to be around 10,000 men. While the exact number of casualties among the Muslim defenders is not specified, they successfully repelled the Crusader assault. The arrival of a large Muslim army under the command of Nur al-Din significantly bolstered their numbers and morale, contributing to the Crusader retreat. In a separate engagement, the Battle of Jaffa saw the Crusaders lose 2 out of 80 knights and 2,000 infantry, while the Muslim forces lost 700 men.

c. Logistics and Strategic Geography

The Second Crusade (1147-1149) faced significant logistical and strategic geographical challenges that contributed to its ultimate failure. The vast distances involved, the need to traverse diverse terrains, and the complex political landscape presented formidable obstacles for the Crusader armies. The logistical undertaking of moving large armies from Western Europe to the Holy Land was immense. Kings Louis VI of France and Conrad II of Germany led their forces, which suffered heavy losses even before reaching their primary objective. The armies struggled with inadequate provisions and faced harsh conditions during their journeys. For instance, Conrad's German troops, rejecting advice to follow a coastal route, moved directly into Anatolia, where they were severely weakened by Turkish attacks due to weariness and lack of supplies.

Similarly, the French passage from Ephesus to Antioch was harrowing, with dwindling supplies and an unjust blame placed on the Byzantines. The geographical routes chosen by the Crusaders were fraught with peril. The primary routes involved either land passage through Anatolia or sea travel, both of which presented strategic disadvantages. The Byzantine Empire, under Emperor Manuel I Comnenus, was a crucial geographical factor. While strategically allied with some Western powers against the Normans, Manuel was wary of the Crusader armies passing through his territory, fearing they would disrupt his foreign policy and provoke attacks from his truce with the Sultan of Rûm. The Crusaders' passage through Byzantine lands was marked by tension and mistrust, with accusations of Byzantine treachery contributing to the Crusaders' hardships.

8. External Powers and Influence

a. The Papacy

The Second Crusade, launched in response to the fall of Edessa in 1144, was a significant event in the history of the Crusades. Unlike the First Crusade, it was led by two European monarchs: King Louis VI of France and Emperor Conrad III of Germany. The Crusade had multiple objectives, including the recapture of Edessa, but also campaigns in Spain and the Baltic region. However, the expedition faced numerous challenges. Both Louis VI and Conrad III's armies suffered heavy losses during their journeys to the Holy Land, particularly from Turkish attacks in Anatolia.

Upon reaching the Holy Land, the Crusaders, along with Baldwin II of Jerusalem, decided to attack Damascus. The siege, however, proved disastrous. Internal disputes among the leaders, coupled with the arrival of a Muslim army under Nur al-Din, led to the Crusaders' retreat and a humiliating failure. This defeat ensured that the Christian crusader states in the Holy Land would remain on the defensive.

b. The Byzantine Empire

The Byzantine Empire, under Emperor Manuel I Comnenus, had a complex and often strained relationship with the Second Crusade. While the Crusade was intended to aid the Christian East, its arrival in 1147 significantly disrupted Manuel's foreign policy, which included alliances with Western powers like Germany and Venice against the Normans. Manuel was wary of the Crusaders passing through his territory. He had made a truce with the Turkish sultan of Rûm to ensure the Crusade would not provoke attacks on Byzantine lands in Asia Minor. This strategic move, however, was perceived by many Western Christians as a sign of Greek apostasy. The passage of the German and French armies through Byzantine lands was fraught with difficulties. Conrad III's poorly disciplined troops caused tension in Constantinople, and Louis VII's army faced hardship and blamed the Byzantines for their misfortunes. Some French followers even accused Emperor Manuel of treason and urged Louis to attack the Byzantines, though Louis ultimately chose to restore any imperial possessions he might capture. Despite these tensions, Manuel I maintained a degree of cooperation with Emperor Conrad II against the Normans. However, the Second Crusade's failure and the subsequent perception in Europe that the Byzantines were part

of the problem rather than the solution, deepened the animosity between the Greek East and the Latin West.

c. Regional Muslim Powers

During the Second Crusade, the primary Muslim powers that the Crusaders encountered were based in Syria and Egypt. The fall of the crusader city of Edessa to Seljuq Muslim troops in 1144, led by Zangi, was the catalyst for the Second Crusade. Zangi's son, Nür al-Din, continued to consolidate Muslim power in the region, eventually capturing Damascus in 1154 and laying the groundwork for Saladin's rise.

The Crusaders, led by Kings Louis VI of France and Conrad I of Germany, suffered significant losses during their journey and ultimately failed in their objective to recapture Edessa. Their disastrous siege of Damascus in 1148, where they faced Nur al-Din's forces, led to the Christian crusader states in the Holy Land being pushed onto the defensive.

9. Timeline of the Events

1099 - Establishment of the Crusader States

The Kingdom of Jerusalem, the County of Edessa, the Principality of Antioch, and the County of Tripoli are among the Christian nations that were founded in the Levant after the First Crusade was successful. For these states to survive, European assistance and reinforcements were crucial.

1144 - Edessa's Fall

After a victorious siege, the Muslim monarch Imad ad-Din Zengi takes Edessa. This shook the Christian world and represented the first significant Crusader power to fall to Muslim armies. Pressure for a new crusade grew as word of defeat swiftly spread throughout Europe.

1145 - Papal Call for a New Crusade

Following Edessa's loss, Pope Eugene III issued the papal bull *Quantum Praedecessores*, explicitly urging Christian leaders and their adherents to begin a fresh campaign to protect the Crusader nations and try to retake Edessa. For individuals who joined the campaign, the edict placed a strong emphasis on spiritual benefits like indulgences and sin forgiveness. This papal proclamation was one of the first times a

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pope had officially called for a Crusade, and it established a standard for subsequent religious and military mobilisations throughout Europe.

1146 - Recruitment and Preaching

Leading religious figure Bernard of Clairvaux preached in favour of the crusade while travelling widely throughout France and the Holy Roman Empire. He encouraged aristocrats, knights, and even common peasants to join the military expedition by preaching. Many Europeans were persuaded to join the Second Crusade by Bernard's eloquence and spiritual authority, underscoring the close connection between politics and religion in mediaeval Europe.

1147 - Crusader Armies Depart Europe

Under the command of King Louis VII of France and King Conrad III of Germany, two significant European armies were established. These soldiers started their difficult trip into the Holy Land, passing through Byzantine Empire territory before entering Seljuk-controlled Anatolia. Despite its size, the expedition encountered logistical difficulties, such as the issue of managing sizable troops through hostile and uncharted territory.

October 1147 - German Defeat in Anatolia

Seljuk Turkish forces attacked the German army near Dorylaeum, resulting in a disastrous defeat. Poor supply routes, rough terrain, and frequent attacks by highly mobile Turkish cavalry presented the crusaders with tremendous challenges. The setback illustrated difficulties of waging war in the Middle East without sufficient planning or local backing, and heavy casualties crippled the German forces.

1147-1148 - French Army Faced Difficulties in Anatolia

While travelling through Anatolia, the French crusader army faced comparable difficulties. The soldiers suffered greatly from exhaustion, malnutrition, illness, and persistent harassment by Turkish forces. The remaining forces eventually reorganised and resumed their march toward the eastern Mediterranean in spite of these setbacks, demonstrating both their tenacity and the challenges of long-distance mediaeval warfare.

1148 - Crusaders Arrived in the Levant

The remaining European armies eventually arrived at the Crusader States after months of difficult travel and significant casualties. They collaborated with local leaders to organise the campaign's next stage. But there were internal conflicts among leaders

on strategy, especially whether to try to recover Edessa or focus on other strategic goals.

June 1148 - Council of Acre

Leaders of the Crusader movement gathered at Acre to determine a cohesive plan. The leaders decided to assault Damascus, a wealthy and strategically important city, even though Edessa was the primary motivation for the crusade. Political factors, regional affiliations, and scepticism about the viability of recapturing Edessa all played a role in this decision.

24-28 July 1148 - Siege of Damascus

Expecting a quick victory, Crusader forces started the siege of Damascus. However, the campaign was swiftly undercut by fierce opposition from the city's defenders as well as inadequate coordination and disputes among the crusader leaders. The crusaders gave up the siege after just four days. The defeat showed the limitations of crusader military might and represented a significant blow to European aspirations in the Levant.

1149 - End of the Second Crusade

The majority of European forces left the area after the failed siege. The primary goals of the Second Crusade (restoring Edessa and fortifying the Crusader States) were not accomplished. The campaign highlighted the difficulties of organising multinational expeditions in the mediaeval world and had a long-lasting effect on both Europe and the Levant, influencing the political and military climate and subsequent crusades.

10. Characters

The Crusaders

Pope Eugene III

The head of the Catholic Church and the primary authority behind the Second Crusade. In response to the fall of Edessa, he issued the papal bull *Quantum Praedecessores*, calling upon Christian rulers and nobles to defend the Crusader States. His authority was spiritual rather than military, but his influence over European monarchs and clergy played a critical role in mobilizing the crusade.

King Louis VII of France

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King Louis VII was one of the most powerful European monarchs to participate in the crusade. Motivated by religious devotion and political pressure, he led a large French army to the Holy Land. His campaign was marked by logistical struggles and military setbacks, particularly during the difficult march through Anatolia.

Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine

One of the most influential noblewomen of the medieval period, Eleanor accompanied Louis VII on the crusade along with many of her vassals. Her presence was unusual for a queen and contributed to political tensions during the campaign. She was known for her intelligence, strong personality, and significant political influence.

King Conrad III of Germany

The ruler of the German kingdom and leader of the German crusading army. Conrad III marched toward the Holy Land through the Byzantine Empire but suffered major losses when his forces were defeated by Seljuk Turks in Anatolia. Despite these setbacks, he later joined the crusader forces in the Levant.

Manuel I Komnenos

The Byzantine emperor who ruled during the time of the Second Crusade. Although he was a Christian ruler, his interests were focused on protecting Byzantine territory and influence. Manuel had a complex relationship with the crusaders, cooperating with them at times but also remaining cautious about their intentions.

Baldwin III of Jerusalem

The young king of the Kingdom of Jerusalem during the Second Crusade. Baldwin ruled one of the most important Crusader States and was directly involved in coordinating with arriving European forces. His kingdom was responsible for defending Christian territories in the Levant from surrounding Muslim powers.

Raymond of Poitiers

The ruler of the Principality of Antioch, one of the northern Crusader States. Raymond hoped to use the crusading armies to strengthen his position against Muslim forces in the region. His strategic priorities sometimes conflicted with those of other crusader leaders.

Joscelin II of Edessa

The final ruler of the County of Edessa. His loss of the city to Zengi in 1144 shocked Europe and became the main reason for launching the Second Crusade. Although he lost his territory, Joscelin remained an important crusader noble seeking to reclaim his lands.

Thierry of Alsace

A powerful noble from the County of Flanders who joined the crusading forces. Thierry was an experienced military leader and played a role in campaigns in the Holy Land. His ambitions included gaining prestige, influence, and possibly territory through participation in the crusade.

Bernard of Clairvaux

One of the most influential religious figures in medieval Europe. Bernard traveled across France and the Holy Roman Empire preaching in favor of the crusade. His sermons inspired thousands of nobles and knights to take up the cross and join the expedition.

The Great Seljuk Empire

Sultan Mesud I

The Sultan of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum in Anatolia. His forces played a crucial role in resisting crusader armies as they passed through Anatolia. Mesud relied on mobility, ambush tactics, and knowledge of the terrain to weaken the invading crusader forces.

Imad ad-Din Zengi

The powerful ruler of Mosul and Aleppo who captured Edessa in 1144. This victory marked the first major Muslim reconquest of a Crusader State and directly triggered the Second Crusade. Zengi became a symbol of Muslim resistance to the crusader presence in the region.

Nur ad-Din Zengi

The son of Zengi and one of the most capable Muslim leaders of the period. Nur ad-Din continued his father's mission of uniting Muslim territories and resisting the crusaders. He would later become one of the most influential rulers in Syria.

Mu'in ad-Din Unur

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The military governor and effective ruler of Damascus. Unur was responsible for organizing the defense of the city during the crusader attack in 1148. His leadership helped repel the crusaders during the failed Siege of Damascus.

Kilij Arslan II

A Seljuk prince who later became Sultan of Rum. During this period he was involved in regional power struggles and conflicts against crusader forces moving through Anatolia.

Shams al-Din Altun Aba

A regional Seljuk military commander involved in defending Muslim territories against crusader advances. Leaders like Altun Aba played important roles in organizing local resistance and coordinating with larger Muslim powers.

Najm ad-Din Ayyub

Najm ad-Din Ayyub was an experienced Kurdish military commander who served under the Zengid rulers, particularly Nur ad-Din. He governed important territories in northern Syria and played a role in strengthening Muslim resistance against crusader states. Ayyub was known for his political skill, loyalty to the Zengid leadership, and administrative ability. He is also historically significant as the father of Saladin, who would later become one of the most famous leaders in the history of the Crusades.

Hasan ibn Gümüştegin

A Turkish regional commander associated with Seljuk and allied forces. Leaders like Hasan were responsible for local defenses, troop mobilization, and maintaining control over strategic towns and fortresses.

Emir of Dorylaeum

A regional Seljuk governor responsible for the city of Dorylaeum in Anatolia. The region was strategically important because crusader armies had to pass through it on their way to the Levant. Local emirs coordinated attacks and ambushes against the crusader forces moving through Anatolia.

Saif ad-Din Ghazi I

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A member of the Zengid dynasty who ruled Mosul after Zengi's death. He worked to maintain the power of the Zengid state and continue resistance against crusader expansion in the region.

11. Further Reading

Siege of Edessa (1144) | Description, Second Crusade, &Significance | Britannica
<https://share.google/vU94ewPbzNXV6MuRV>

Second Crusade | European history | Britannica Second Crusade - World History Encyclopedia

First Crusade - Wikipedia <https://share.google/6A3crT1QvoOUHiB3U>

First Crusade - World History Encyclopedia

The First Crusade: 2 | Faculty of History University of Cambridge

Siege of Edessa overview and causes of the Second Crusade -
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Edessa_\(1144\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Edessa_(1144))

General chronology of the Second Crusade -
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronology_of_the_Crusades

Siege of Damascus (1148) -
<https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Damascus-1148>

Overview timeline of the Second Crusade - <https://time.graphics/period/160373>

Fall of Edessa (1144) - <https://www.britannica.com/event/Siege-of-Edessa>