



EXECUTIVE COMMAND OF THE NASRID EMIRATE

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Letter from the Executive Board

Greetings delegates,

A very warm welcome to La Martiniere Model United Nations 2025. It gives us immense pleasure to serve as your executive board.

Considering this is a crisis simulation, you will not just be diplomats behind the microphone, you will be rulers, warriors, viziers, inquisitors, and kings shaping the final chapter of an eight century conflict.

The purpose of this background guide is to give you a comprehensive introduction on the agenda of the committee, i.e, “Addressing the external threats and internal divisions of the Nasrid Emirate”. The guide aims to give you a brief introduction to the agenda with respect to historical, economical and geopolitical perspectives as well. This guide aims to give you just the right amount of information, aiming to help you through events/topics related to the agenda. This is in no way exhaustive though, and the executive board not only welcomes, but encourages the delegates to do a thorough research on their own as well.

The outcome is not written. Will Granada fall as history remembers, or can strategy, diplomacy, and betrayal rewrite the end of the Reconquista?

We sincerely hope that this committee will help you hone your debating and diplomatic skills. Hoping for a deliberate and fruitful discussion!

Regards,
The Executive Board

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INTRODUCTION TO THE CRISIS

The War of Granada (1482–1492) marked the final act of the Reconquista, the centuries-long campaign by Christian kingdoms to reclaim the Iberian Peninsula from Muslim rule. By the late 15th century, the once-mighty Nasrid Emirate of Granada was the last Muslim stronghold in Spain, its power fractured by internal strife and encircled by the unified crowns of Castile and Aragon, led by Ferdinand II and Isabella I.

The year 1491 is decisive. Granada is under extreme pressure, its people starved, and its leaders divided. On the other side, the Christian armies camp at Santa Fe, building a city of war as they prepare their final assault. Inside the Alhambra, Emir Muhammad XII (Boabdil) struggles to hold his throne as rival factions advance and lose faith.

Your mission as delegates is to navigate this time of instability. Whether you serve the Emirate or the Crown, every directive, alliance, and betrayal will determine the fate of Iberia.

Historical Context & Timeline

The War of Granada emerged over years with its own nuances and complexities. It was the inevitable result of shifting alliances, tumultuous empires, and a continent ready for consolidation under faith and crown.



Pre-War Context (13th–15th Century):

- 1238: The Nasrid Dynasty establishes the Emirate of Granada under Muhammad I ibn al-Ahmar, becoming a vassal state of Castile in exchange for tribute.
- 1340–1400s: Granada thrives as a center of trade, architecture and scholarship but is militarily weak. Internal court rivalries and dependence on Castile define its politics.
- 1469: The marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile unites the two most powerful Christian realms in Iberia, setting the stage for a unified Reconquista effort.
- 1470s: The Christian kingdoms stabilize after years of civil wars and focus on external expansion: Portugal in Africa, Castile toward Granada.

Historical Context & Timeline

Early Sparks of Conflict (1481–1485)

- 1481: The Nasrid army under Abu al-Hasan (Muley Hacén) raids and captures the frontier town of Zahara, breaking the truce with Castile.
- 1482: Castile retaliates and captures Alhama de Granada. The war begins in earnest.
- 1483: Boabdil, son of Muley Hacén, rebels against his father, plunging Granada into civil war. He is captured at Lucena by Christian troops, released under oath, and becomes a vassal to Ferdinand and Isabella.
- 1485: Muley Hacén is deposed, his brother al-Zagal takes the throne, further dividing the Nasrid elite.

Christian Momentum and Nasrid Decline (1486–1490)

- 1486: Ferdinand leads a relentless campaign through western Granada. The Christians capture Ronda and Loja, gaining strategic access to the heartland.
- 1487: The siege and fall of Málaga marks a turning point. Thousands are enslaved, showing Castile's determination for Reconquista.
- 1488: Baza, Guadix, and Almería fall to the Christian army. Boabdil, seeing defeat inevitable, reaffirms his vassalage to Castile.
- 1490: Only the capital, Granada, and its surrounding valleys remain free. Granada is economically strangled, militarily weakened, and politically divided.

Historical Context & Timeline

Final Campaign and the Siege of Granada (1491)

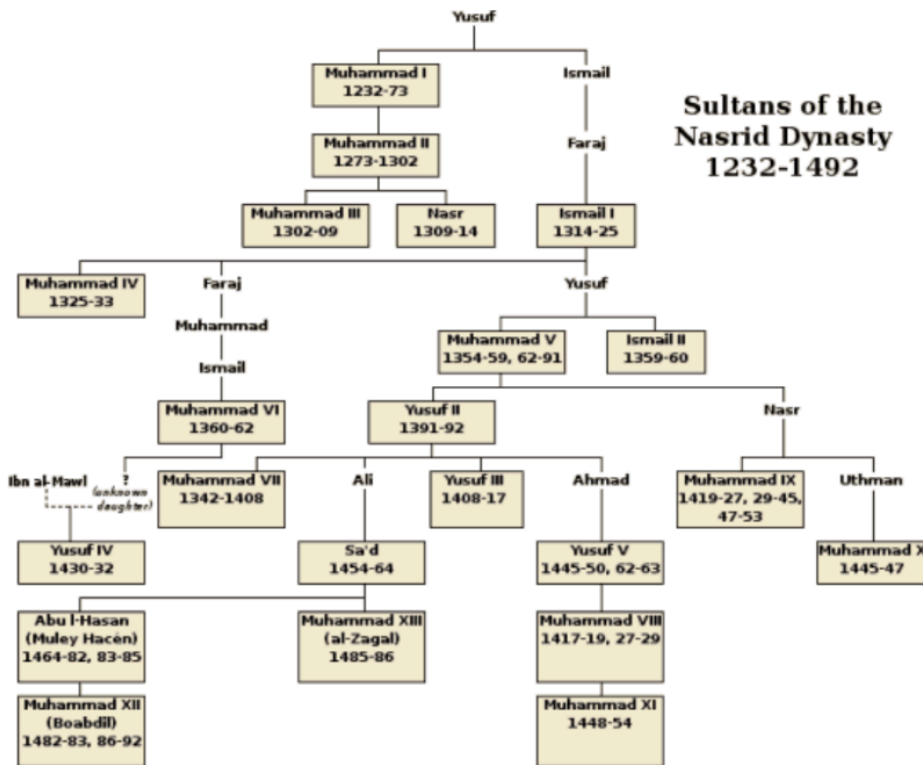
- April 1491: Ferdinand and Isabella establish the Christian camp at Santa Fe, effectively creating a new city dedicated to the siege.
- May 1491: Christian artillery begins a sustained bombardment. Granada's outer fortifications are damaged, famine and disease take root.
- June 1491: Christian lines encircle Granada completely. The spies from Nasrid report discontent among the nobility, the Emir faces pressure from the Vizier and religious clerics.
- July 1491: Rumors of negotiations, but hardliners oppose surrender. Civilians riot as food runs out.
- 10 August 1491 (Freeze Date): The siege continues and Boabdil remains defiant, but his council is fractured. The Christian camp thrives. Meanwhile Granada faces imminent collapse.

Aftermath (Beyond the Freeze Date)

- 25 November 1491: The Treaty of Granada is signed, guaranteeing religious freedom and safety for Muslims.
 - 2 January 1492: Boabdil formally surrenders Granada to Ferdinand and Isabella. The Reconquista ends.
 - 1492 Onwards: The treaty is soon violated, leading to forced conversions and eventual expulsion of Muslims and Jews from Spain.
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Factions and Power Structures

Nasrid Emirate of Granada



Dynastic lineage of the Nasrid Sultans of Granada

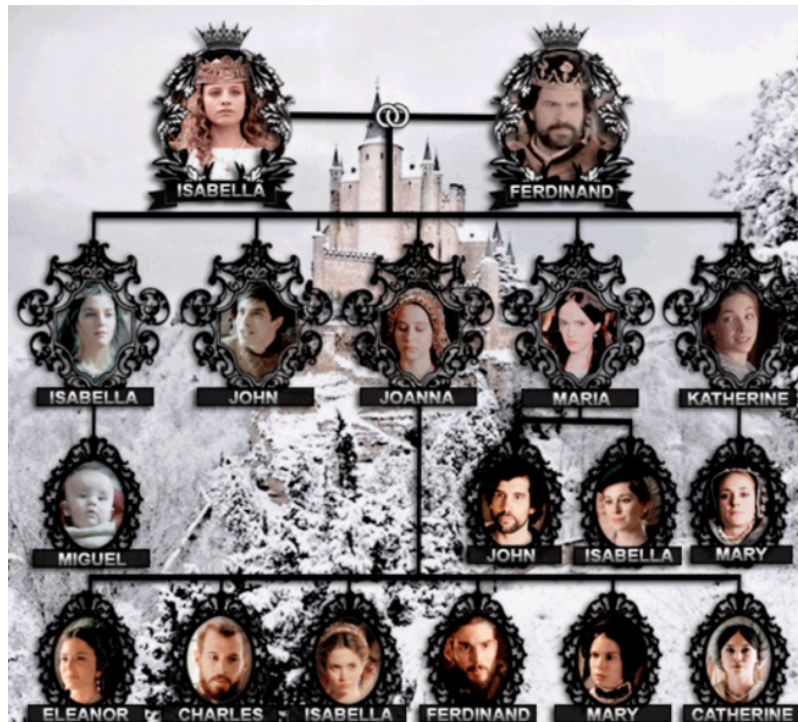
Supreme Authority: Emir Muhammad XII (Boabdil)

- **Royal Household:** Chief Advisor, Royal Consort, Crown Prince (if included)
- **Vizierate and Bureaucracy:** Grand Vizier, Treasurer, Chief Qadi, Head of the Diwan, Chief of Intelligence (if included)
- **Military Command:** Commander of the Alhambra, General of the Cavalry, Governor of the Frontier, Commander of the City Guard
- **Religious Authority:** Mufti of Granada, Chief Imam, Head of the Ulama Council
- **Provincial and Civil Posts:** Governors of Málaga, Guadix, and Almería, Merchant Guild Representative, Head of the Artisans, Spymaster
- **Foreign Connections:** Ambassador to the Marinid Sultanate (Morocco), Envoy from Fez/Tunis etc.

Challenges: Famine, low morale, no coastal ports, internal betrayal.

Factions and Power Structures

Crown of Castile and Aragon



Supreme Authority: Their Catholic Majesties Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile

- Royal Court: Royal Confessor (Talavera), Treasurer (Quintanilla), Chief Diplomat, Queen's Chamberlain
- Military Command: Gonzalo de Córdoba (General of Infantry), Rodrigo Ponce de León, Marquis of Cádiz, Artillery Commander, Knightly Orders (Santiago, Calatrava, etc.)
- Nobility: Dukes, Counts, and regional governors serving under the Crown
- Religious Authority: Archbishop Mendoza, Inquisitor General Tomás de Torquemada, other clerics
- Bureaucracy & Advisors: Secretaries, Accountants, Spymasters, Royal Chronicler
- Extra Portfolios: Papal Nuncio, Foreign Ambassador (Italian States, Navarre), Military Engineer, Merchant Financiers

The Geopolitical Environment

A. The Catholic Monarchs

The siege of Granada is both a political and religious campaign. Ferdinand and Isabella's goal is total surrender—not negotiation. However, they are mindful of maintaining Europe's image of fairness and may allow conditional capitulations.

B. The Marinid Sultanate (Morocco)

Granada's traditional ally. However, internal instability and Portuguese pressure on Morocco's coasts prevent meaningful aid. Still, the Marinids may send supplies or asylum offers if persuaded.

C. The Ottoman Empire

Though distant, the Ottomans under Bayezid II have shown symbolic solidarity with Iberian Muslims. Delegates may seek Ottoman naval support, though success would depend on strategic realism.

D. Papal and European Influence

The Papacy supports Ferdinand's crusade, offering indulgences and funds. Other European powers (France, Portugal, Venice) monitor events closely, viewing Spain's consolidation as a geopolitical shift.

Socioeconomic and Religious Dynamics

Granada's economy relies on silk production, irrigation-based agriculture, and trade with North Africa and the Mediterranean. The siege has disrupted all commerce, leading to inflation and food shortages. The religious fabric of Granada remains complex:

- Muslims form the majority, but Mudejars (Muslims under Christian rule) and Mozarabs (Christians under Muslim rule) also live within the city.
 - Jews, though small in number, serve as financiers and traders but face persecution from both sides as tensions rise.
 - Public sermons increasingly invoke jihad and martyrdom, revealing a growing fatalism among the populace.
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Strategic Levers for Crisis Control

In this crisis committee, delegates (representing both major and minor powers) can employ various strategic levers to influence the conflict's direction. Below is a guide to universal tools of wartime statecraft – each lever is defined with notes on how it can be deployed in practice:

- **Propaganda:** Deliberate shaping of information and narratives to influence public opinion, morale, and perception. This can be deployed via state-controlled media, posters, broadcasts, and speeches to rally one's own population or to demoralize the enemy. By exaggerating victories or enemy atrocities, propaganda bolsters domestic resolve and sows doubt or panic behind enemy lines.
- **Economic Pressure:** Using financial and trade measures to coerce or weaken adversaries. Tools include sanctions (bans on trade of key goods), asset freezes, tariffs, and blockades of shipping. Economic pressure can starve an enemy of vital resources or funds, undermine their industry, and incentivize neutral parties to distance themselves from the target. Conversely, offering economic aid or favorable trade to allies can strengthen one's coalition.
- **Espionage:** The use of spies and intelligence networks to gather information, steal technology, and sabotage the enemy from within. This lever involves infiltrating enemy governments or armies, intercepting communications (codebreaking), and conducting reconnaissance. Effective espionage yields crucial foreknowledge of enemy plans and can enable disinformation campaigns – feeding false information to mislead rival decision-makers. It also sets the stage for targeted strikes and pinpoints vulnerabilities for sabotage.
- **Proxy Warfare:** Influencing conflict outcomes by supporting third parties rather than committing regular forces directly. This includes arming and funding allied armies, resistance movements, or insurgents to fight on one's behalf. Through clandestine arms transfers, volunteer “advisors,” or logistical support, a group can bleed its rival via proxies (for example, backing partisans or encouraging uprisings in enemy-occupied territories) while minimizing its own casualties. Proxy warfare allows smaller powers to receive great-power support and lets major powers extend their reach without open war.

Strategic Levers for Crisis Control

- **Diplomatic Realignment:** Shifting the international balance through diplomacy – forging new alliances, neutralizing potential foes, and isolating enemies. Tactics include negotiating mutual defense pacts, non-aggression treaties, or conditional support agreements. Diplomatic realignment might involve prying an enemy's ally away through incentives or guarantees, winning over unaligned nations to join one's camp, or coordinating policy among allies. By altering the diplomatic landscape, a delegate can encircle the adversary politically and ensure support when crises escalate.
- **Sabotage:** Covert operations aimed at disrupting the enemy's war effort behind the front lines. Sabotage can be undertaken by special operatives or local partisans to destroy critical targets: blowing up bridges, derailing troop trains, bombing arms factories, cutting communication lines, or spreading chaos through acts of subterfuge. Successful sabotage can delay enemy offensives, erode their logistical support, and have outsized effects on morale (knowing that one's rear areas are vulnerable). It's a high-impact tool to weaken an opponent from within, especially useful for those with limited conventional strength.
- **Strategic Resource Control:** Gaining and denying access to the raw materials that fuel war. This lever involves securing sources of oil, steel, aluminum, rubber, food, and other essentials – either through territorial control, trade agreements, or stockpiling – while simultaneously choking off the enemy's access to those resources. Tactics include naval blockades, occupation of resource-rich regions, destroying infrastructure as one retreats (scorched earth policy), or buying up supplies on the world market. By mastering key resources, a nation can sustain its military and industrial power while impeding the enemy's ability to fight over the long term.

Each of these strategic levers can be mix-and-matched in creative ways during crisis updates. Delegates should think in terms of actionable plans: e.g. using propaganda to influence a neutral country's populace, launching espionage to steal an enemy battle plan, or applying economic pressure to push a rival to the negotiating table. The tone of committee decisions should be resolute and pragmatic – in wartime, decisive action using these tools can alter the balance of power. Delegates are encouraged to employ these levers with both ingenuity and an eye toward their nation's strengths: even a smaller power can, for instance, engage in sabotage or propaganda to punch above its weight. By mastering these universal instruments of crisis management, the committee can navigate the turbulent wartime landscape and potentially steer the course of history.

The Situation on 10 August 1491

Granada is starving. Its once-bustling bazaars are silent, its wells nearly dry. It is a city under siege both physically and spiritually. Inside its ancient walls, the once-vibrant capital is reduced to hunger, despair, and whispers of betrayal.

The Alhambra Palace, once a symbol of Nasrid prosperity, now serves as a fortress and refuge. The Emir and his viziers deliberate daily amid the echo of distant cannon fire. Civilians line up for rationed bread. Horses are slaughtered for food. Disease spreads through the lower quarters. Reports indicate that supplies can last no more than two weeks.

Beyond the walls, the Christian camp at Santa Fe flourishes. Built on strict discipline, it has become a functioning city complete with churches, markets, and workshops. Ferdinand and Isabella maintain separate courts but act in concert. Soldiers remain motivated by promises of reward and salvation. Religious fervor burns bright, with sermons before every assault.

However, cracks exist even among the victors. Aragonese troops complain of unequal pay. Some commanders, tired of the prolonged siege, urge negotiations. The Inquisition presses the monarchs to ensure no leniency toward the infidels, while clerics like Talavera advocate mercy to ensure long-term peace.

Diplomatically, Boabdil's envoys have been spotted in the Christian camp, suggesting backdoor talks. Rumors of a secret council debating terms of surrender, though hardliners among the Nasrids threaten to depose the Emir if he concedes.

In essence, 10 August 1491 stands as the threshold between endurance and collapse. Granada is exhausted, yet defiant. The Christian Crown stands ready to strike, yet divisions exist over how merciless victory should be. Every decision henceforth, no matter how big or small, can alter the course of Iberian history.

Major Topics for Deliberation

- The Siege of Granada – Continue defense or seek surrender?
 - Famine and Civil Unrest – Manage resources or risk revolt?
 - Religious Policy – Peace with tolerance or conversion by force?
 - Foreign Intervention – Seek aid from North Africa or Italian states?
 - War Finance – Mint new currency, seize Church wealth, or levy new taxes?
 - Succession & Legitimacy – Can Boabdil retain power after surrender?
 - Diplomatic Negotiation – Shape the final treaty or defy history entirely.
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Crisis Rules and Procedure

This committee follows Crisis ROPs. They also depend on the discretion of the Executive Board:

- **Moderated Caucus:** Discuss focused issues (e.g. food shortage, diplomacy).
 - **Unmoderated Caucus:** Plot alliances and directives.
 - **Directives:** Action plans (public or private) sent to the crisis backroom.
 - **Private Notes:** Covert communications to allies or adversaries.
 - **Joint Directives:** Inter-bloc actions (e.g. peace talks, truces).
 - All directives must be plausible for 1491. No modern technology, no anachronistic forces, and all actions must be within your power and position.
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References

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THE TWELFTH SESSION