

University of Nevada

**Axis Mundi:
An Analysis of Byzantine Imperial Geography**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Geography

by

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ABSTRACT

This work is a geopolitical analysis of the Byzantine Empire's method of governance, expansion, and imperial administration over the lands it chose to inhabit. While no single scholar or then-contemporary Byzantine author has articulated a specific policy of geostrategy in the Byzantine Empire, this dissertation demonstrates an overt bias in Byzantine military and diplomatic operations toward coastal regions and maintenance of their physical control within the Mediterranean Basin. These imperial choices were fueled largely by: 1) the reigning geopolitical model of the Byzantine Empire; 2) the importance of the capital, today's Istanbul (then Byzantium, and later, Constantinople); 3) the distribution of other major cities of the Empire; and 4) the maritime-based trade economy of the Byzantine Empire.

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This work is dedicated to the memory of

Dr. Gary J. Hausladen,

who introduced me to the vast, humbling, and exciting world of geography, and
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Chapter 1

Introduction



Figure 1.1: Map of the Eastern Mediterranean during the reign of Basil II.¹

Basis

What began as an interest in a core argument of regional geography — that each place is distinct from every other and must therefore be studied as unique — was soon transformed into a case study for what will hopefully be a recognizably novel method of historical geography and strategic analysis. With encouragement from Dr. Paul Starrs, this dissertation was transformed from a

¹ Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. See: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5b/Khazarfall1.png>

study in economic and geographical exceptionalism into a more measured approach bringing to bear imperial geopolitics, geoeconomics — or a geography directed wed to economic history, and geostrategy. As its example and evidence-source I draw on one of the most remarkable times, places, and situations in human history. Being acutely familiar with the diplomatic and intelligence communities, Dr. Starrs saw an opportunity for me to place this dissertation on the spearhead of a new wave of geopolitical analysis. This wave comes at the cusp of a distinct change in the Global War on Terror, as the world moves toward a multipolar setting.² Harkening back to the delicately chosen alliances of the Middle Ages (the timeline that this dissertation embraces), our current climes and times command a renewal of cold realism in the “geo-” of geopolitics, as opposed to an attempt to deal sweepingly with broadly idealistic theories.

This dissertation, therefore, is best not viewed as a contribution to the especially recent developments of Byzantine historical scholarship. Rather, I seek an effective approach to the methodology of applied geographic analysis, drawing on a remarkable example in world history. Indeed, this work tracks the relationship of a singular geography as it applies to history, and I seek to present the context of place in a better and more broadly applicable view — going beyond the unique to generalizable lessons. An overall purpose is the demonstration of an approach to analysis that relies on strategy beyond simple

² Daniel Flesmes, "Network Powers: Strategies of Change in the Multipolar System." *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 6 (July 25, 2013): 1016-36.

technological capability, intelligence, and physical geography. Human interaction with the land in terms of economics, cultural significance, and societal drive needs to be incorporated into geostrategic analysis to facilitate a better understanding of any society that is being scrutinized. This dissertation, then, happily remains in the spirit of studies and diverse theories of regionalism, and places its argument, as many a fan of regional geography has suggested is desirable, in the context of time and place.

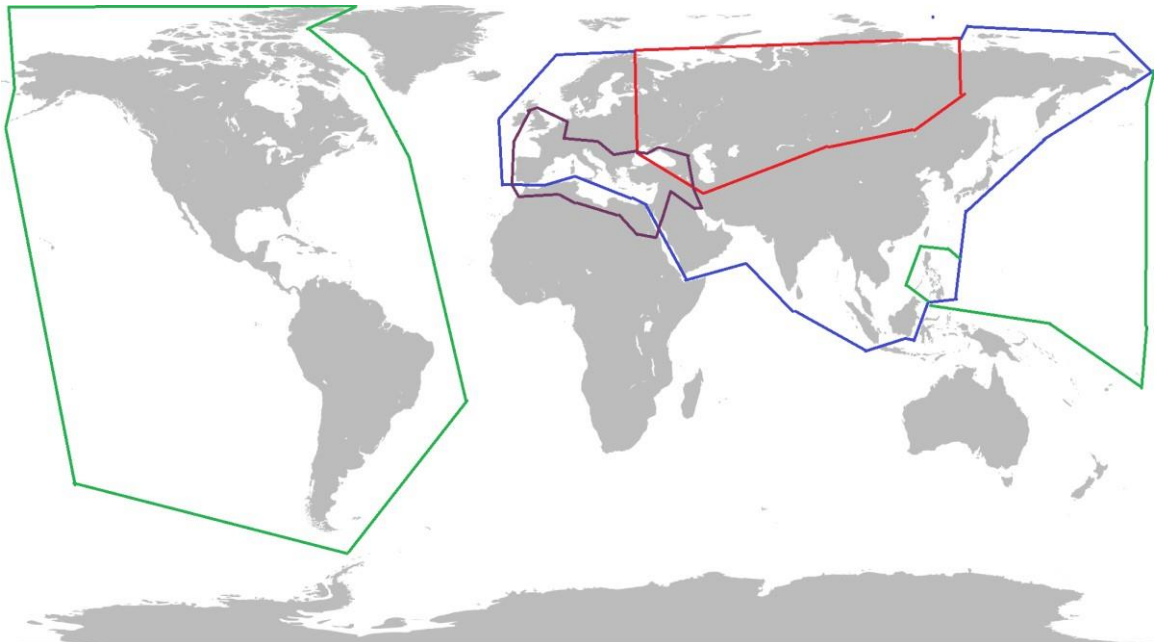


Figure 1.2: Regional interests of imperial geographers and historians.³

Area of interest for Sir Halford Mackinder and General Karl Haushofer outlined in red. Blue indicates region of interest for Admiral A.T. Mahan and Nicholas Spykman. Green area indicates D.W. Meinig's region of interest. Purple indicates

³ Modified. Base image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. See: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ec/World_map_blank_without_borders.svg.

interest of Edward Gibbon and Edward Luttwak.

As a subject of inquiry and as an example of empire, the Byzantine era is truly remarkable. Here was a continuation of Roman civilization — pushing in time across more than two millennia of history — that fits poorly into the narrative of history, despite the Byzantine Empire’s situation at the geographic heart of Western Civilization. Yet traditional scholarship dismisses this long-lasting realm, with even longer-enduring impacts on history and humanity, as something of a broken shadow of its Western Roman predecessor.⁴ Within the last few decades that view is barely revised, and then only by a handful of historians. The Byzantine Empire was a world power rich with trade and enlightened well beyond its neighbors in regard to technology, prosperity, and social livelihood.⁵ Simply put, as a geopolitical entity, it does not fit into the stereotype of the Middle Ages as a stagnant and decadent mess; nor can it be squeezed into the prevailing theories of history. Its exceptionally long narrative of civilization, which arguably predated the founding of the city of Rome, is worthy of examination through three criteria proposed by the late Dr. Gary Hausladen: “Where? Why? Why there?”

This dissertation concludes that the remarkable Byzantine Empire has everything to do with the so-called “geo” of its geopolitics, which helped sculpt its maritime, military, economic, spiritual, cultural, and political nature. Using the many lessons that the durable Roman civilization may afford current-day

⁴ Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Volume 5* (New York: Everyman’s Library, 1994), 82-83.

⁵ John Julius Norwich, *A Short History of Byzantium* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), xxxix-xli.

students, this strategic analysis will illuminate a fundamental point of human geography — people and place develop one another.

Organization and Format

For the sake of uniformity and possibility of publication, the chapters of this dissertation are organized by format, length, and style according to specific guidelines. Pertinent journals were selected based on their scope of study, similarity of submission guidelines, and accessibility by new scholars.⁶ Therefore chapters 2, 3, and 4, which are designed to be standalone article manuscripts, adhere to a series of uniform patterns for both publication and dissertation purposes, in accordance with the University of Nevada, Reno's, Graduate School policies. The chapters are between 5,000 and 7,500 words in length, with citations by footnotes, and not to exceed 25 pages with embedded images.

Given the historical case and guidelines of the journals, this dissertation adheres to the Chicago Manual of Style in formatting. The citation style utilizes footnotes for the sake of digital submission, even though these journals as a rule require the use of endnotes; while going from one to the other when separated for journal submission involves a few clicks of a mouse, sustaining both styles in a dissertation is complicated to the point of the surreal. Formal submission of the

⁶ *Historical Geography*, *The International Journal of Naval History*, *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*; and *The Journal of Near Eastern Studies*. See the following web links for respective submission guidelines:

<https://ejournals.unm.edu/index.php/historicalgeography/about/submissions#authorGuidelines>,
<http://www.ijnhonline.org/submissions/>,
http://www.cmrs.ucla.edu/publications/comitatus_submission_guidelines.html,
<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/journals/jnes/instruct.html?journal=jnes>.

chapters for publication⁷ will utilize endnotes. Although the chapters enclosed are designed to be standalone articles, they are ordered and formatted in such a manner to facilitate a single, monographic narrative.⁸

Theses, Originality, Common Themes, and Continuity



Figure 1.3: The Eleventh Century decline of the Byzantine Empire.⁹

This dissertation's overall intent is to utilize a multifaceted geopolitical approach in an historical area where such scholarship is largely lacking. Political events during the Byzantine Empire are in some regards satisfactorily documented, making it a prominent empire in eastern European history. Yet despite a justifiable claim to the status of an empire (explored in Ch. 2), there is no careful documentation of the geopolitics, geostrategy, or economic function across the

⁷ To include chapter 4, which has been submitted for review to the *International Journal of Naval History*.

⁸ This point is further elaborated in the section Theses, Originality, Common Themes, and Continuity.

⁹ Map courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. See:

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/c/c1/Aftermath_of_Manzikert.PNG.

large area of land dominated by the Byzantine Empire. Chronologically, this work primarily concerns itself with the turbulent Tenth through Twelfth Centuries AD.

The above map depicts the shift of fortune in 1071 of the Byzantine Empire ensuing after the Battle of Manzikert. Nearly every holding in Anatolia was lost to the Seljuq Turks until the reign of Alexios I Komnenos and the Crusades. Numbers indicate years of battles. This roughly three hundred year era is notable for its cycles of triumph and defeat — the hegemonic imperial identity of the Byzantine Empire is tested. This dissertation draws on primary and secondary Byzantine sources to demonstrate that in the Byzantine imperial psyche, there was no reason to overtly state what places were important to conquer, re-conquer, and/or over which to maintain defense.

This study focuses, in particular, on the maritime character of the Byzantine Empire, which although addressed by previous scholars, is imperfectly explored with regard to the consequences of its maritime domination on the Mediterranean Basin. The overall effort addresses that unique maritime character of the Byzantine geopolitical model, a trait generally unexplored, though vital. Chapter 2 puts to the test a regional methodological approach to this Byzantine case study. It answers two questions: Was the Byzantine Empire a relict heritage to its Western Roman counterpart? How was that imperial character expressed in military campaigns? For the first question, the article concludes that the Byzantine imperial administration's treatment of the lands it conquered, expression of powers over lands not formally Byzantine, and geopolitical

practices are indeed indicative of an empire.¹⁰

For the second question, Ch. 2 uses a comparative geographical approach to determine what past, contemporary, and later empires, if any, exercised a model like the Byzantine one. In successful defense of the realpolitik, regionalist approach of case studies, Ch. 2 finds that many empires shared similar traits in geopolitics and geostrategy, but none were quite like the Byzantine Empire. The Byzantine Empire — like all places, after all — is rooted in physical geography and developmental features of human society. Originality lies at the heart of this methodological approach to the Byzantine Empire — no other project has taken this comparative approach in deciphering the political character of the Empire's rulers.

A third chapter addresses the economic character of the Byzantine Empire and helps decipher a number of issues pertaining to Byzantine geopolitics. Ch. 3 considers the restrictions of trade in the Mediterranean Basin and weighs how limitations affected the importance of Byzantine lands from a regional — rather than Byzantine — perspective. In addressing this issue, the chapter helps illuminate why the Byzantine imperial administration of the High Middle Ages chose to pursue the reconquest policies it did when faced with a number of alternatives in the securing of its frontiers. Moreover, the oceanographic features of the Mediterranean and technological capabilities of the time help reveal what

¹⁰ See the Geopolitics, Geostrategy, and Imperial Geography section of this dissertation's literature review.

lands were consistently contested as the Byzantine Empire and its neighbors entered the High Middle Ages and early Renaissance.

Finally, with the material reasons established for the advantage of Byzantine landholding, Ch. 3 shows how the geographical patterns of Mediterranean trade prompted the development of the Western European economy. This final portion lends itself to one of the most important and controversial revelations of this strategic case study — Byzantine geography shaped its maritime trade character, which in turn had an impact on regional development in Western Europe. This Byzantine role has not been fully explored by previous European historians and geographers, additionally lending to the originality of this individual chapter. It was the established trading infrastructure coupled with the desirable locale of the Byzantine Empire that gave it an advantage and turned it into a constant danger zone across its gradually shrinking frontiers.

The final content chapter of this effort in research and writing is placed intentionally at the end. With the geopolitical character and geoeconomic features of the Byzantine Empire established, this chapter explores Byzantine geostrategy in action. Like Ch. 2, Chapter 4 argues that although a strict geostrategy is not stated in the Byzantine imperial administrations that need not be so; to the emperors and their advisors, the concept of a secure coastline was a self-evident necessity.

The importance of the Byzantine economy not only for the Empire but for

the whole of the Mediterranean Basin was a given for all who benefitted from it, not least among them the Empire's administrators. Chapter 4 explores the tumultuous years leading up to the Crusades to demonstrate that the retention and support of cities was of vital importance after the devastating losses seen on the Anatolian Peninsula as an aftermath of the Battle of Manzikert. Beyond that, Ch. 4 explores how foreign intervention in the form of the First Crusade was used diplomatically to Byzantine advantage. Through the use of prestige, espionage, and manipulative diplomacy, the Byzantine Empire managed to direct the Crusader forces to advantageous points of its defense. Remarkably, for a time these operations turned the Crusades away from the Holy Land. Here was an effective demonstration of the imperial rulers' desire to secure its economically vibrant and vital coasts.

Drawing upon primary and secondary accounts of these campaigns, Ch. 4 argues for an unspoken yet consistent geostrategy. The Byzantine forces must have known what their objectives were because these reconquest forces were swiftly and brutally mobilized. Given their rapid success, prior to assuming command of these operations there was a planned policy and strategy. The evidence presented indicates this controversial conclusion, which has so far remained absent from primary or secondary scholarly work.

Although these chapters are couched as distinct manuscripts, they work toward a common theme based on the specific regional topic and thematic approach. Perhaps the most important contribution of the several discussions,

then, is the common geographic theme that unites all of these articles. The union of geopolitics, geostrategy, and geoeconomics is necessary to fully develop the three individual fields.¹¹ This dissertation's takeaway would read: The interrelation between humans and their environment and place therein is embodied by the material benefit of the lands they desire and inhabit. Through this interaction strategy — epitomized in military and diplomatic operations — Byzantine imperial geography is born. The unifying theme of these works, which in turn creates the dual nature of this dissertation as both monograph and article collection, is a reexamination of the field of geopolitics that it is hoped reorients that field toward a realist and regionalist perspective.

Literature Review

The literature review for this dissertation can be divided into three distinct categories. The first constitutes the historical geography underlying the case study, hereafter written up as Byzantine regional geography. Within this category, there are primary archival sources and secondary historical works on the Byzantine Empire. The second category concerns a collection of relevant geopolitical and strategic geographical works utilized primarily for methodological purposes. Finally, a collection of works on economic history and development theory lends itself to the originality of this dissertation and is a precursor for the geostrategic analysis methodology employed.

¹¹ As discussed further in the methods section of this chapter.

Byzantine Regional Geography

The primary and secondary sources covered in this dissertation focus largely on the Tenth through Eleventh Centuries in Byzantine history. This period bears a rapid cycle of return and loss of fortune for the imperial administrations. For this reason, the primary and secondary sources delve into great detail concerning the historical and political theories of why the Byzantine Empire struggled and triumphed. Remarkably though, none of these sources, including those focused heavily on military strategy, elaborate on geostrategy or focus on trade. Rather, this prompt appears to be implied. The study of these economic and geographic Byzantine sources reveals the Empire to be a maritime trade power, a status that must be fought for and maintained, even in its darkest hour. Nevertheless, this lack of articulation adds importance to the whole of this dissertation in the historiography of strategy and geopolitics.

Primary Sources

Constantine VII,¹² a Tenth Century emperor of the Byzantine Empire, wrote a series of works to prepare his son, Romanos, for ascension to the imperial throne. Perhaps the most famous of these works is his work on imperial administration, which serves as a diplomatic manual and ethnography for the

¹² Constantine Porphyrogenitus, translated by R.J.H. Jenkins, *De Administrando Imperio* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1967).

Empire and its bureaucracy. Constantine recounts in great detail the importance of how the Empire must interact with its inhabiting peoples and inhabited places. In this respect, the manual is geopolitical in nature. Given its overt and intentional bias, it cannot be counted a reliable source of history.

However, the nature of Constantine's writing in *De Administrando Imperio* is illuminating. Constantine shows his reader ten centuries later a profoundly Byzantine-centric view of the world. Second, interactions with fringe provinces of the Empire, which are also contested by these documented peoples, are given an account of their importance to Constantinople and the Byzantine economy at large. In particular, the relationship between Cherson, the Pontic region of Anatolia, and Constantinople illuminates the core and periphery basis of the Byzantine economy, a hub-and-spoke relationship centered on the capital and its directly outlying regions. While Byzantium was a realm of many dispersed parts and a variety of crucial outposts, its center was potent. Authority could be vested in the fringe dependencies, but allegiance to Constantinople (consider the name, of course) was never to be questioned.

John Skylitzes,¹³ an historian who wrote at the height of the Byzantine middle period, concerns himself with a critical era in Roman history that saw a transformation from the defensive dark age of the Empire to the shaky Byzantine renaissance that heralded an onset of the Crusade era. The reconstructed and

¹³ John Skylitzes, translated by John Wortley, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History: 811-1057* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

translated volume, like most court histories, covers the major strategic events and personalities dealing directly with the imperial court. For its discussions of strategy the Skylitzes-authored work is invaluable for primary source research. Rather than glean any significant historical discoveries, the study of Skylitzes helps clarify the Byzantine geographical mindset in its pursuit of Empire. The Empire's rulers viewed their realm as a world-center. Territories were seen strategically, and assessed in terms of their significance during a long intervening period of reconquest.

Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*¹⁴ is one of the most thoroughgoing single volume analyses of primary Crusade sources ever written. Writing from the perspective of the Byzantine emperor's daughter, previously the imperial heiress, details the important conflicts of the Crusades in Byzantine and Turkish territories from a perspective that is neither Crusader nor Moslem. Komnene's work cannot be interpreted as unbiased, however, as it clearly telegraphs an intent to glorify her father. From a strategic perspective, this primary document is of immense importance in accounting for the locations of major campaigns in imperial history. Even in the period documented prior to the Crusades, Komnene clearly shows the directed use of Byzantine resources in recovering coastal and urban areas in this tumultuous period of Byzantine history, lending importance to the coastally based geostrategy that this dissertation directly argues. Moreover, diplomacy is painstakingly detailed by Komnene; the Byzantines used the Crusader forces to

¹⁴ Anna Komnene, translated by E.R.A. Sewter, *The Alexiad* (London: Penguin, 2009).

recover these regions of vital economic interest to the Empire. This action further defends Luttwak's thesis of a multifaceted approach to Byzantine strategy.

This court history from the jurist Michael Attaleiates¹⁵ builds the context for Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*. The immediate economic downturn that ensued after the prosperous reign of Basil II, pointed out by Jenkins, is largely the subject of Attaleiates largely critical political history. From this perspective, Attaleiates gives a fairly impartial view of the context that allowed for the devastating geographical loss at Manzikert. Perhaps most notable is the level of excitement he displays for the upstart general Alexios Komnenos, father of Anna Komnene, who would turn around the waning fortunes of the Empire in the wake of the Crusades. From a geographical and strategic perspective, Attaleiates focuses his attentions on the loss of major economic cities and decreasing trade volumes as evidence for the greater thesis, lending credence to the concept of a coastal and economic mindset within the Empire's scholarly community.

The Patria, an anonymously compiled account¹⁶ of the Byzantine Empire's capital, is the most thoroughgoing single primary source available on Constantinople's urban geography dating to the Middle Ages. Working from a landscape based perspective, *The Patria* details the history and cultural significance of landmarks, and in particular the commemorative monuments of

¹⁵ Michael Attaleiates, translated by Anthony Kaldellis and Dimitris Krallis, *The History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

¹⁶ *The Patria*, translated by Albrecht Berger, *Accounts of Medieval Constantinople* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

various imperial rulers and dynasties. The importance of Constantinople is spelled out, along with why so many important physical pieces of the Empire were brought to that city on-a-choke-point in order to grant legitimacy. The narrative helps the reader understand why the Empire viewed this city as sacred. Additionally, many passages in this work help illuminate which structures and locations in the Empire were of political and strategic importance for policy and defense.

Secondary Sources

Warren Treadgold's *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*¹⁷ builds on a Byzantine historiographical tradition rooted in the revision of Edward Gibbon's approach reflecting the author's distasteful view of Byzantium. Since the 1920s, the succession of Runciman, Ostrogorsky, Norwich, and then Treadgold has served as the seminal basis for a revising of Byzantine history. Treadgold's work, while not as general in scope as the multivolume work of his predecessor John Julius Norwich, nevertheless captures what is the most comprehensive and thorough volume readily available on Byzantine politics. For the purpose of this current project, which focuses on strategy and geopolitics, Treadgold's sizeable history serves as the basis for all region and period specific secondary research.

R.J.H. Jenkins's *The Byzantine Empire on the Eve of the Crusades*¹⁸ sets

¹⁷ Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

the macrohistorical and geopolitical stage for understanding the beginning of the Crusades. He gives us a scholarly context for *The Alexiad's* account, which relates the Emperor Alexios's direct appeal to the Papacy for the detachment of heavy cavalry support from the kingdoms of Western Europe. Jenkins pays vast attention to the height of the so-called Macedonian Renaissance created by Basil II, recreating this geopolitically buffered and economically prosperous period after the devastation of the Battle of Manzikert. This historical context helps explain why, after devastating losses in Anatolia, the Byzantine military was more focused on recovering control the coasts. Jenkins provides an explanation for why the Byzantines pursued inland campaigns after the vital coastal provinces along Anatolia and up through the Pontic region were engaged.

Imperial Geographies, a compilation of articles,¹⁹ serves as perhaps the first outright geography of the regions associated with the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires that is available to a mainstream public. The first chapter is of particular importance to this study, and deals with filtering Constantine VII's series of instructions to his son, Romanos, with specific attention to *De Administrando Imperio*. This article's scholarly lens transforms the body of ethnographic and cultural history that Constantine provides into an unspoken geostrategy for imperial administration (although arguably one obvious to the

¹⁸ R. J. H. Jenkins, *The Byzantine Empire of the Eve of the Crusades* (London: Wyman and Sons, 1953).

¹⁹ Sahar Bazzaz, Yota Batsaki, and Dimiter Angelov, *Imperial Geographies in Byzantine and Ottoman Spaces* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

Empire's inhabitants). The second essay deals with an imperial administration's view of their realm as the consensual apogee of the world. Its author, the Harvard-trained Byzantine scholar, Dimiter Angelov, demonstrates how primary sources presented Europe as the western realm of the Empire, with Asia and Africa as the eastern realm — truly, a global perspective as such matters were understood in their day. Naturally, this self-centered geography placed the Byzantine Empire, and more specifically Constantinople, as the center of the world. From a cultural perspective, the essay illuminates why Byzantine geostrategy dealt with the fringes of Constantinople in its reconquest efforts rather than focusing on expeditions further from the capital than the Byzantine would have been capable of mustering and controlling from a technological standpoint.

Angeliki Laiou and Cécile Morrisson's 2007 study of *The Byzantine Economy*²⁰ ambitiously reviews an historical evolution of the Byzantine economy. Unique in the evolving field of Byzantine studies, it offers the single most comprehensive volume on the Byzantine economy available. Beginning with natural resource availability and then expanding on how the Byzantine Empire's economy evolved throughout distinct and separate eras, the crux of Laiou and Morrisson's argument is that the overall strength of the Byzantine Empire coincided with tight central control of a nation-state's economic policy. Laiou and

²⁰ Angeliki E. Laiou and Cécile Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Morrisson, in a twist pushing back against the traditional economic policy, argue in a Wittfogel-like turn that this tight control does not equate to the reduction of markets. In fact, the introduction of new markets specifically with Western Europe is facilitated by imperial decree and privileges. For this dissertation, the argument voiced by Laiou and Morriison has proved immensely helpful in illuminating which territories were of strategic economic importance to the Empire. Moreover, this Wittfogel-style thesis of controlled market introduction is used to argue for a greater Byzantine role in the development of Europe emerging from the Dark Ages.

In the volume that is of rare but great significance for any student of history and empire,²¹ Edward Luttwak's *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* represents a new trend in the sequence of Byzantine history that culminated with Warren Treadgold's work. Luttwak takes a military, strategic, and diplomatic approach to Byzantine history and illuminates the cultural character of the Byzantine Empire in order to understand why, historically, it lasted so long and was so important to the narrative of Western civilization. He begins with the military events that separate the Byzantine Empire geographically and historically from the Western Roman Empire. From there he presents an overview of the distinct diplomatic and military character of the Byzantine Empire with respect to the specific peoples that had a significant impact on its history. Other subjects

²¹ Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

covered in Byzantine strategy, which help detail the eclectic and pervasive nature of the imperial regimes include religion, symbolism, marriage, and historical prestige. While Luttwak does cover the importance of geography with respect to its interaction with these peoples, he ultimately does not discuss an overall economic and geostrategic policy centered on the Mediterranean, Achaean, and Black Sea coasts. He does, however, agree with Laiou and Morrisson's assessment of the distinctly naval character of the Empire. Luttwak's work is immensely helpful to this dissertation, yet his omission lends to this work's originality.

Geopolitics, Geostrategy, and Imperial Geography

Strategy and politics are the oldest applications of geography. After all, it is necessary to understand how civilizations subdue the lands and people they inhabit to truly understand human geography. Moreover, the process of which lands man chooses to dominate when in conflict with one another (geostrategy) is at the core of this dissertation. Although ancient, this application of geography is far from stable in its study. No single approach to the study of imperial dominion or strategy has dominated the scholarly field entirely. Indeed, strategy and geopolitics have fallen out of favor depending on the historical events that prompt their study. Looking at the case study of this dissertation, the collection of works represents a methodology and field of scholarship in its own right. Through defining empire and strategy, this dissertation will discuss how the Byzantine

Empire fits into these geographic models. It will be a feat never before accomplished in the study of geopolitics.

The Syracuse University geographer D.W. Meinig's four-volume magnum opus, *The Shaping of America*,²² is concerned with analyzing the historical events and interactions that through time and ongoing exploits brought the United States of America to take on its modern-day geographic shape. It serves as a unique and comprehensive historical geography of the United States, while at the same time presenting a massive cartographic undertaking unparalleled in scholarship. Additionally, this work serves two purposes in analyzing geopolitics. In particular, the groundbreaking first volume helps to set out imperial geopolitical models that may then be applied for a comparative geography of Byzantine geostrategy.

Further, Meinig's assessment, which classifies the United States as an imperialist power based on geographical, rather than historical or ideological, criteria is the same method I have sought to use for this dissertation. Like Meinig, I approach this study through geographic context, coverage, scale, structure, tensions, and change. In using these as his essential yardsticks for empire, Meinig rightly labels United States as a geopolitical empire, one defined by its interest and strategy, as a nation-state, in expanding its control over an unwieldy territory and eventually gaining control over that realm. Very much those same

²² D.W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History, 1492-2000*, in four volumes, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986–2004).

categorizations may aptly be applied to a geopolitical analysis of the Byzantine Empire.

In *Geopolitics and Empire*,²³ the geographer Gerry Kearns examines a buildup of the British Empire through the lens of Sir Halford Mackinder's World Island Theory. Kearns argues that the actual theory and methodological vein of the theory as world hegemony through key land holdings has not departed from the scholarly realm of geopolitics and decision-making in American politics to the present day. In this respect, his work is as much historical and biographical as it is geopolitical. Yet his introduction is quite useful in analyzing the geopolitical definition of empire. He deviates from Meinig's six criteria of spatial analysis and instead uses five identifiable traits of empire — a perpetual sense of crisis, an innate sense of superiority among the peoples' inhabitants, the persistent use of force in diplomacy, a justification of its position of power through cultural exceptionalism, and a belief that power can conquer the known world. Although Kearns' theory applies more specifically to modern global empires, this imperial attitude is apparent, if not exemplified, by Byzantine geopolitical attitudes and is used in this dissertation to confirm Byzantine imperial power is more than titular.

The distinguished geostrategist and former U.S. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski in 1997 published a *Foreign Affairs* article titled "A

²³ Gerry Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire: The Legacy of Halford Mackinder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Geostrategy for Eurasia,"²⁴ on the shift of an expanding NATO alliance toward a Pacific inclusion, represents a change in the field of geopolitics emerging from the Cold War. He argues that the focus on Russia and the European and Near Eastern theaters will expose the increasingly globalized world to unconventional universal threats. What makes Brzezinski's work remarkable is its place in scholarship, showing a renewed interest in geostrategy and geopolitics compared to the previously narrow focus of containment and reactions to the Cold War. Apropos Mackinder, his work represents a more pure geostrategy inasmuch as he directly argues that regions can be of political and strategic advantage to the United States. This renewed methodological approach not only shows the relevance of current geostrategic analysis, but also how historical case analyses much like the theory and agenda that is presented in this dissertation may be useful in building a thorough narrative and wisdom-enriched approach to the geostrategic field. With an attention, first advanced in 1964, to perceptions and fears at the height of the Cold War,²⁵ *Politics and Geographic Relationships* presents the major themes that came to dominate the field of political geographical methods. Jackson's authors, in his edited study, explore the evolution of political geography, international relations, and strategy within the context of the early 1960s in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs incident and the Cuban Missile Crisis. In direct contrast to this dissertation, however, Jackson as

²⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "A Geostrategy for Eurasia," *Foreign Affairs*, 76, no. 5 (1997): 50-64.

²⁵ W.A. Douglas Jackson (editor), *Politics and Geographic Relationships: Readings on the Nature of Political Geography* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1964).

that fifty-year-old volume's editor succeeds in focusing more effectively on political theory and action and rather less on the axes of geopolitical movement. The methodological approaches, which are contemporary in their cases, explore nationality, environment, and most importantly strategy, mobilization, maritime issues, infrastructure, and nationality. This paradigm openly contradicts the (later) writings of Brzezinski, who seeks to explore the hierarchy of important lands rather than how social science can be used to predict land domination. There is always a question, in geostrategy and geopolitics, about whether scholarship has any active predictive or retrospective value, and a somewhat skeptical approach to social science approaches is anything but irrelevant to military strategists and intelligence analysts who will try, as a part of their practical mandate, to find a path toward the highest-value uses of academic methodologies and prognostications.

Karl Wittfogel's *Oriental Despotism*²⁶ is an important deviation from a traditional Marxian narrative of historical economic development. He examines Southwest Asia and North Africa to show a massive transformation to the traditional advancement of feudalism to capitalism. He argues that political officials had a profound command over the labor class, which allowed Near Eastern societies to undertake extraordinary projects based less on the traditional sustenance of an agrarian economy and more on projects that help

²⁶ Karl A. Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (New York: Random House, 1981)

sustain the authority's political character of control. Wittfogel specifically addresses the Byzantine Empire and equates the process of Hellenization (from the earlier Latin character of the Byzantine Empire) with political "Orientalization." He argues that this political hegemony allowed the Byzantine rulers to shift the geopolitical character of the Empire away from the agricultural character of the Western Empire to trade focused more on a maritime, urbanized society.

Seeking to deviate from the traditional narrative of *realpolitik* as governing the international world, Dr. Geoffrey Parker²⁷ attempts to analyze the realm of international relations through a scope of geographic possibilism. He argues that the nature of the earth influences mankind's major diplomatic decisions. It culminates with his final assertion that geopolitics should be viewed in two ways — geographic and political conditions lead to armed conflict and diplomatic cooperation. A discussion of the effects of geography on the development of nations and states, his fifth chapter serves as a useful scholarly scope in determining the political character of the Byzantine Empire and understanding its conflict-ridden history. It is through this extension of geopolitical possibility that this dissertation's analysis of Byzantine geostrategy and geopolitics differs from the work done by Edward Luttwak on Byzantine strategy.

John Agnew's study of *Geopolitics*²⁸ is a challenge to the field of international relations from a methodological and geographical perspective. By

²⁷ Geoffrey Parker, *Geopolitics: Past, Present, and Future* (London: Pinter, 1998).

²⁸ John Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-visioning World Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

an academic geographer with a longstanding interest in the Italian Risorgimento culminating in the efforts of Garibaldi, his is a timely work created in the wake of renewed late Twentieth Century scholarly interest in the realm of geography brought on by the Cold War's end. Agnew, like Parker, contends that simple realpolitik and logical anticipation is insufficient to evaluate the realm of international relations scholarship. Rather, Agnew asserts that the geographical facet, with specific attention to how the world is conceived by the political actor, is necessary to understand geopolitics in its totality. Agnew argues that as the physical world has become more known by the hegemonic powers in play since the Modern Era (starting with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648), the importance of other players in the global arena expands. These powers are important not just by virtue of being subjugated by European powers. He introduces a new aspect to traditional realpolitik through historical analysis — rather than treating the world as individual actors in the global arena, significant historical events move these individual states along a hierarchy of geopolitical power. It is this latter theoretical approach that is particularly useful for this dissertation. The Byzantine emperors' ability to influence Europe and the Near East had a direct historical impact on its ability to hold diplomatic and military sway well beyond its borders. Rather than treating the Byzantine Empire as an anomalous actor that solely extolled might, it should be treated as a part of the complex weave of the tapestry of power that defined the Middle Ages. The Empire's influence waxed and waned in accordance with its political borders and geographical victories.

Ellsworth Huntington's *Mainsprings of Civilization*²⁹ is considered one of the most important in the narrative of environmental determinism. Published during a time when Darwinism was prevalent in academic thought, Huntington argues in favor of environmental factors. Climate, specifically, has a genetic impact on the behaviors of groups of peoples. Through these factors, he argues, history unfolds in a somewhat fatalistic fashion. However Ellsworth Huntington's work refutes racial traits in favor of sampled ethnic groups, which he calls "kiths." His studies are notable for their treatment of human-environmental interaction in the shaping of history, but are often criticized by more recent geographers as geographic determinism, for an overemphasis on climate and physiography as factors that govern the characteristics and evolution of human societies.

Huntington's argument further falls short where he discusses the Byzantine Empire, which cannot be confined to one climatological period or region, yet has a pattern of cultural and economic behavior specific to its character. Moreover, the peoples of the Empire cannot be confined to a single "kith." The Romans of the Byzantine period were unified in language and religion more than any single, monolithic genetic identity.

Robin Butlin's *Geographies of Empire*³⁰ deviates from the standard regional style method of studying empire. Butlin instead uses the major empires

²⁹ Ellsworth Huntington, *Mainsprings of Civilization* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1945). Huntington pushed geography as exploration and discovery in ways that his relative, the Union Pacific Railroad's Collis P. Huntington, and C.P. Huntington's son (and an early benefactor of the American Geographical Society) Archer Huntington would recognize and applaud.

³⁰ Robin A. Butlin, *Geographies of Empire: European Empires and Colonies c. 1880-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

of the modern era for his case analyses and examples to reinforce imperial themes. Butlin explores land usage, migration patterns, societal concepts of imperial motherland and colony and popular and scholarly concepts of empire (including the civilization process of empire), urban structures, cultural and biological hierarchy, and resource exploitation. This work is noteworthy for its methodological approach to the modern concept of empire. This dissertation will use a similar method as in the fourth chapter of this work to discuss why the Byzantine rulers chose to pursue certain patterns of geostrategy. In addition, Butlin's examples will serve as the basis for a comparative geography of the Byzantine Empire and modern imperial era.

Clarence Glacken's *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*³¹ concerns itself with the scholarly view of humanity and its environments from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century. Piecing together historical evidence, his unparalleled work discusses three facets of viewing the earth. These distinct historical paradigms are organized chronologically. First, Glacken explores the idea of Earth as a divine gift for humans. Second, he explores the roots of geographic determinism on cultures in history. Finally, he discusses how humans have attempted to subdue the environment for social and scientific betterment. This work is useful in determining how the Christian medieval mind viewed the environment through these scopes. It further helps illuminate the sense of cultural and geographic

³¹ Clarence J. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

entitlement of the Byzantine emperors, who saw their Empire as the epicenter of the world for religious and political reasons.

Gray Brechin's *Imperial San Francisco*³² delves deeper than the mere aesthetic and place experience of a western North American coastal city. Brechin argues that San Francisco serves as an ideal case study for how a major, renowned city develops beyond merely the apparent economic and social impacts of its existence. Instead, Brechin contends, raw resources, for mining in particular, serve the core of the city in direct contrast to the agrarian environment. Perhaps most profound and original concerning Brechin's work, something directly applicable to this dissertation, is how a city interacts with the surrounding countryside. In exchange for using raw materials in the hinterland, the major city offers a marketplace vitally important to rural development. Most important, though, Brechin argues that San Francisco became an imperial city due to this expansion of resource dominance on a global scale. Constantinople, like San Francisco, served a similarly dominant and vital economic role during the Byzantine era. Brechin's argument further explains the Byzantine zeal to defend its sacred capital and how the Empire was viewed as geographically subordinate to the urban epicenter. Brechin's argument coupled with Laiou and Morrison's historical observations help explain why all major imperial trade was in some way logistically linked to Constantinople.

³² Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin*. Berkeley: University of California Press (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

*Geography and Empire*³³ details chronologically the role of the scholarly field of geography in the formulation and maintenance of empire during the Second Wave of Imperialism. Using different European, Japanese, and American nations that transformed into empires as its case studies, the articles explore the scholarly origin for imperial paradigms in strategy and decision making, the colonial rush of the Nineteenth Century, the rhetoric used to maintain empire, the enacting of imperial geostrategy and its political effects throughout the empire, and the shift of geographic scholarship and political paradigm after the fall of empire. This metamorphosis of ideas is largely embodied by Smith and Godlewska's commentary on how geography was viewed, which was initially proposed by Joseph Conrad. Initially, there is the period of 'Geography Fabulous' — the romanticizing of distant lands largely in the spirit of Edward Said's works. Secondly, there is 'Geography Militant' — the need to use the Enlightenment to conquer the lands and peoples for the sake of some loftier political goal — as embodied in the latter part of Clarence Glacken's work. Finally, there is 'Geography Triumphant' — the notion that humanity has conquered the unknown, and potentially nature itself, with political implications of a globally victorious empire. This methodological approach is applied to the Modern Era for the purpose of this work, but these paradigms bear a striking resemblance to the struggles faced by Europe as it emerged from the Dark Ages. The specific

³³ Anne Godlewska and Neil Smith (editors), *Geography and Empire (IBG Special Publications)* (Hoboken: Blackwell Publications, 1994).

difference, however, was Europe's regional scale at this time. The Byzantine Empire, its Roman-era predecessor, and indeed the Hellenistic era of Alexander certainly saw conquest as a means of understanding the world. Within academic geography — as in anthropology, sociology, history, and various wings of political science — taking pleasure in such triumphalism is considered in poor taste.

Abigail Jacobson, in *From Empire to Empire*,³⁴ challenges the notion that the sudden separation of the First World War and ensuing British rule was an entirely distinct shift in the history of Jerusalem. Rather, she explores how Zionism arose in a city with a growing Jewish population that constituted the majority of inhabitants by the time of the breakout of the war. Religion played a direct role in policymaking for both of these world powers. Despite the frontier location of this small city, she argues it played a large role in imperial echelon politics at the capitals. This intricate treatment of holy cities and their role on urban landscape and cultural relations is an important methodological approach to the study of the Byzantine Empire. Jacobson's *longue durée* approach to urban geography is crucial to understanding cultural relations and religious geography. Since the Empire held many cities including Jerusalem, which played a critical role in the Church, Jacobson's work is pertinent. Moreover, the Byzantine administrators, like the Ottoman and British, integrated the Church into imperial politics.

³⁴ Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem between Ottoman and British Rule* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011).

In an approach fifty years ago somewhat akin to this dissertation's, Edward Spicer's *Cycles of Conquest*³⁵ is a case study using a methodological approach to the realm of geopolitics. Spicer focuses on the peoples of the American Southwest — both the conquering and the conquered group — and attempts to describe how the Spanish-Mexican and larger Anglo-American conquerors attempted to incorporate the conquered tribes to form a larger society. He explores themes such as outright assimilation, geographical segregation, and incorporation of native traits into the conquering society. Economic domination, educational control, and religious conversion are major methods discussed. It is this methodological approach and aforementioned institutions that are of greatest use to this study of Byzantium. The imperial, self-focused method of Byzantine politics to civilize its allies, spread Christianity, and promote foreign trade throughout Constantinople all fall into Spicer's approach to the American Southwest. Additionally, these patterns of dominance can be used as a comparison of the earlier Byzantine Empire and Modern Era imperial powers.

Unlike most other studies and regions covered in geopolitical theory, Walter Prescott Webb's *The Great Frontier*³⁶ is an historical approach, although well-grounded in an understanding of geographical expansion and context. Webb

³⁵ Edward H. Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico, and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1533-1960* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1962).

³⁶ Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Frontier* (reprint edition, Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2003).

contends that an abundance of land spurred the development of the new world — described by him and past historians as the frontier. According to Webb, this frontier had a profound impact on economic and political development distinct from the Old World. He contends this was because the Old World did not have the physical space to develop New World style democracy and economics. This theory is, however, criticized by some Russian historians, whose frontier expanded in an opposite direction, from west to east. Likewise, the “Closing of the Frontier” had the most profound impact on shifting the history of American politics. While the Byzantine narrative cannot be incorporated directly into this explanation of American exceptionalism, Webb’s geographic methodology of abundance of space may help account for how Byzantine imperial character differed from Roman Antiquity, which had an abundant frontier in Western Europe. This narrative is opposed to traditional religious narratives and Wittfogel’s argument of Orientalization.

Although not a geographer proper, the modern-day journalist-geographer Robert Kaplan³⁷ is a proponent of geographical themes in the realm of global political analysis. His work analyzes region, history, and strategic scholarship through a geographic lens. He successfully brings realpolitik into a world governed by economic idealist theories. Kaplan espouses that there was a continual series of conflicts rooted in economic scarcity of resources, determined

³⁷ Robert D. Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate* (New York: Random House, 2012).

in large part by physiography and actual location of peoples. While his work is largely based in environmental determinism, his attention to geographic features having a hand in shaping culture is at the crux of this dissertation. In keeping with Kaplan, for example, the importance of coasts in determining economics and strategy in a society cannot be understated.

Geoeconomics and Historical Development Theory

Perhaps the most controversial portion of this dissertation is its challenge to longstanding historical development and economic theories. At the heart of strategy, given this dissertation's realpolitik nature, there must be a reason for a civilization's people to choose which lands to conquer. In the same realist vein, this dissertation assumes the gain to be economic in nature; there must be material, cultural, social, spiritual, and/or operational advantage in land conquest and imperial maintenance. This field of economy preceding strategy can be summed up by the term geoeconomics. The economic basis for Byzantine strategy does not fit into any one traditional narrative of development but rather prompts economy to be treated geographically. To understand the Byzantine Empire in a strategic scope through the lens of regionalism, it must be viewed in a historical and economic context. Therefore this section covers both theory and region and does not confine itself to the traditional era of feudalism. Instead, it reaches to Antiquity for historical context in order to understand the Byzantine economy.

Economic historian Gregory Clark's *A Farewell to Alms*³⁸ is focused on the importance of the Industrial Revolution as a change in paradigm. Prior to that rapid development of capital, Prof. Clark argues, the world population grew with little to no economic gain and was focused primarily on agricultural sustenance and survival — a living exposition of the arguments at the start of the Eighteenth Century issuing from Parson Malthus, in his essays on population.

Although not explicitly billed as such, Clark's work is mostly a continuation of the traditional Marxian historical narrative in its argument that returns in coin, land, or other measurable wealth are the engines of history: historical materialism, in short. It is through the Industrial Revolution that world paradigms in education, survival, production, and even warfare shift. While the profound effects of the Industrial Revolution are indisputable, this dissertation's focus on regional case studies of geopolitics, state-controlled economics, and geoeconomically focused strategy serve to show a flaw in this theory-based view of economic development. With staggering levels of prosperity, specialization, education, and merchant-classed people well before the Industrial Revolution, the Byzantine Empire stands as a variable in Clark's economic and historical narrative. Lending to its originality, this dissertation vouches for a methodological approach of regionalism when evaluating economy and strategy linked to economy.

³⁸ Gregory Clark, *A Farewell to Alms: A Brief Economic History of the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

At the heart of Georges Duby's argument in *The Three Orders*³⁹ is that feudalism was not a simple construct of the Three Estates that applied broadly to Western Europe. Rather, geographically he argues that the model of viewing three clear 'classes' of inhabitants is specifically Cosmopolitaine, Norman, and to a lesser extent, post-Norman English. According to Duby, the articulated system of three orders and royal hierarchy of the Thirteenth Century was already archaic by the time it was written. He contends that this short-lived, clear-cut model was an isolated reaction to the waning of royal authority in the immediate aftermath of the Carolingian period. The prince-bishops and trading Mediterranean republics provide a variable (the latter of which are a focus of this dissertation) that defeats the feudal stratification model. Therefore even in the case of Western Europe, this work coupled with others lends itself to a geographic take on economic development and history, particularly to region, rather than sweeping toward broad historical theory.

Where Georges Duby argues for the origin of the imagined, rigid system of feudalism, Paul Collins's *The Birth of the West*⁴⁰ obliges in providing context. His work is wide in scope, encompassing the preservation of classicism, the origin of trade, the spread of religion, Viking violence, the rebirth of empire in Western Europe, and interrelations between East and West. The visions of medieval

³⁹ Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

⁴⁰ Paul Collins, *The Birth of the West: Rome, Germany, France, and the Creation of Europe in the Tenth Century* (New York: Public Affairs, 2013).

Europe that Collins assesses, following upon the work of Duby, is unrooted in any rigidly organized system but instead is planted in a reaction and interaction among relatively recently settled Germanic inhabitants and the powerful and often dangerous forces on the fringes of Europe, including the Vikings, Islam, and Byzantine Empire. Collins's approach reinforces the regional methodology in observing economic development and geopolitics this dissertation's proposes. His work, like this one, is rooted in realpolitik with a geographic element; indeed, his chapters and sections are organized geographically rather than chronologically.

Henri Pirenne's *Medieval Cities*⁴¹ is among the very first mainstream reactions to Marxian economic development theory. Rather than arguing for a shift of production paradigms as the mode of propelling history, Pirenne argues that it was instead a revival of the Mediterranean economy that moved Europe out of the Dark Ages. The basis of his argument is the development of Italian CityStates closely tied to the Levant through trade with the Islamic world. It was this trade, according to Pirenne, that fostered the economic interests of the Crusades and ultimately propelled Europe from the Dark Ages. The geographical element of Pirenne's work shows a ripple effect of trade from the Levant and Italian coast inward toward Europe as the High Middle Ages ensued. Pirenne's historical researches ultimately served as the basis for the Annales School and

⁴¹ Henri Pirenne, *Medieval Cities: Their Origins and the Revival of Trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

inspired geographically focused scholars such as Fernand Braudel. While the Pirenne Thesis is not outright disputed by this dissertation, it responds to Pirenne's underestimation of the Byzantine imperial economy in European development. Through the lens of understanding Byzantine economic control in the Wittfogel spirit as proposed by Laiou and Morrison, the Pirenne Thesis can be refined to include a far more active Byzantine Empire than he originally proposed in this economic movement toward the Crusades.

Although Fernand Braudel's title claims to be historically focused on a specific point in history within the Mediterranean Basin, his methodological approach makes his work into a magnum opus.⁴² The Braudel study is divided into two halves, with the first, and most geographical, part written from memory when he was interned by German forces during World War II and had access only to sources he knew by rote. Although an historian, Braudel draws on a fundamentally geographical approach to his survey of the Mediterranean Basin's history, which in turn necessitates context as early as pre-Antiquity. Braudel is deeply influenced by the Pirenne thesis, seeing trade as the primary means of propelling Europe toward the titular subject of his work. From this perspective, Braudel's work contributes to this dissertation methodologically and historically. In the case of the former, a focus on economic development and its regional

⁴² Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, translated by Siâm Reynolds, abridged by Richard Ollard, originally published 1949, (New York: Harper Collins Press, 1992).

impact during the Middle Ages is largely an expansion of Braudel's geoeconomic content. For the method brought to bear here, as for Braudel, this dissertation focuses more on individual region and interaction rather than theory-based narrative. This approach allows for a case analysis of economy, strategy, and politics within a specific geographic and cultural context.

One of the most crucial early works in the field of United States historical geography, Ellen Churchill Semple's *The Geography of the Mediterranean Region*⁴³ encompasses the many geographic facets of the Mediterranean and serves as a seminal work on the region from which other geographic studies are derived. It is truly a regional geography in that it is not confined to a specific theme of geography — it covers physical, cultural, and economic studies of the region. Moreover, Dr. Semple's study is not confined to a specific period in history. Of particular importance to this dissertation is Part IV of her work, which covers "Maritime Activities of the Mediterranean." In particular, Semple's chapter on trade and industry, which expounds on the role of coasts for the development of Mediterranean civilization, helps illuminate the geostrategy and economic character of the Byzantine Empire in a greater historical narrative.

John Pryor's volume⁴⁴ tracks advances in the projection of commercial and military naval power from the end of Antiquity through the advent of the

⁴³ Ellen Churchill Semple, *The Geography of the Mediterranean Region: Its Relation to Ancient History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931).

⁴⁴ John H. Pryor, *Geography, Technology, and War: Studies in the Maritime History of the Mediterranean, 649-1571* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Renaissance in the late Sixteenth Century. He examines the geographic conditions of the dynamic Mediterranean climate, the change of shipping and navigation technology in the era, and specific players in the Mediterranean Basin, including the Byzantine Empire. Although Pryor sees the Byzantine era as largely a continuation of technology and strategy from Antiquity, he contests conventional scholarship and argues that the Medieval period saw a paradigm change in the function of a state-controlled navy, with Byzantine and Islamic powers leading a revolution. Those two eastern Mediterranean powers, he argues, were crucial in the creation of an interwoven Mediterranean economy in the Middle Ages that contributed to urban development, in the spirit of the Pirenne Thesis and Fernand Braudel's scholarship. Also of use to this dissertation in its economic scope is Pryor's survey of the prevailing wind and current patterns of the Mediterranean during the Middle Ages. This information points to a series of trade routes across the sea that necessitated interaction with the Byzantine Empire.

The volume edited by King, Proudfoot, and Smith on *The Mediterranean*⁴⁵ is an easily accessible and well-organized narrative available on Mediterranean geography. The first half of the study focuses on the physiographic features of the Mediterranean with specific attention to resources, geology, climate and physiographical transformation. The second delves into the historical

⁴⁵ Russell King, Lindsay Proudfoot, and Bernard Smith (editors), *The Mediterranean: Environment and Society* (New York: Halsted Press, 1997).

geographical development of the Mediterranean. Specifically, the articles on the GraecoRoman and medieval and Renaissance Mediterranean by Graham and Proudfoot, respectively, help illuminate which physical and cultural factors affected trade and development in the Mediterranean. Coupled with Wittfogel's narrative on control and Laiou and Morrison's thesis of specified Byzantine markets, these articles paint a clear picture of how the Mediterranean Basin served as the cradle of civilization and development in the spirit of Pirenne, Braudel, and Semple during the vast Byzantine era.

Alison Burford's volume⁴⁶ on the development of agriculture in Greece, and by extension Western Civilization economic origin, is in direct contrast to Victor Davis Hanson's volume. The Burford thesis contributes to Wittfogel's take on Oriental politics. The Greek agricultural economy and civilizational development was rooted in tight control by the Polis over its hinterlands and inhabitants, and hold that it was immaterial which type of government implemented that control. In her narrative, it is not until the arrival of massive empires following the Alexandrian period and subsequent Roman conquest until the Greek economy largely changes toward a more slavery based one. What ensues, then, is a challenge to the traditional narrative of Marxian economic development, with tight state control over land preceding an apparent interruption of a Western Roman slave-based economy. By the Byzantine period, the

⁴⁶ Alison Burford, *Land and Labor in the Greek World* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993).

Hellenic paradigm of the state controlling and opening local and long-distance markets resumed. Burford's argument, like Wittfogel's, then lends itself to a regional geographic approach to history rather than development theory.

Like Wittfogel, Pirenne, and Braudel, the scholar-historian-farmer Victor Davis Hanson proposes⁴⁷ an aggressively alternative view to the traditional Marxian narrative of economic development and history more fluid to the otherwise exceptional nature of the Byzantine Empire in the Middle Ages. The subject of focus in his work is the hoplites, who are the landed farmer-warriors of early Hellenic civilization. *The Other Greeks* is remarkable because it lacks primary sources, given its prehistorical basis. His thesis is ultimately an apology, in the spirit of the early American citizen-farmer-President Thomas Jefferson, for the preservation of small farms and the yeoman-style democracy it sustained, standing in stark contrast to the controlled economy that Burford proposed earlier. However, Hanson's democratic focus shows a problem in the Hellenic and Near Eastern world with the theory of civilization's early stages of slavery. Indeed, this early Greek model that originated in the Hellenic Dark Age is more akin to feudalism than slavery, with slavery manifesting thereafter. This marked variance, instead, sets the stage for the gradual increase of control in Near Eastern society in the spirit of Wittfogel, Laiou, and Morrisson, while not defeating the possibility of widespread trade across the Mediterranean.

⁴⁷ Victor Davis Hanson, *The Other Greeks: The Family Farm and the Agrarian Roots of Western Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

Echoing and reinforcing much of what Hanson accomplishes, Stewart Gordon shows in the 2008 *When Asia was the World*⁴⁸ an extraordinary geographic variable in the traditional Marxian narrative of history. Through the narrative of travelers across the whole expanse of the Orient, Gordon presents a myriad of market and trade-based societies under powerful central regimes.

These travelers were able to move quite freely and peddle their goods to the benefit of several economies while creating a mystique of the Orient in the spirit of Said for the later European scholars. Although not a direct subject in Gordon's work, the Byzantine Empire exemplifies this narrative of control and trade while standing as an anachronism in traditional historical narrative. Gordon's work challenges the historical 'position' of the Byzantine Empire, which is indisputably located at the heart of Western Civilization but does not fit into the historical narrative. Therefore, Gordon's work shows the importance of physical location at the heart of Semple's argument and in the course of history and economic development above a European-centric theory of development rooted in the prosperity and triumph of the Modern era.

Methodology

This dissertation uses a multifaceted approach to the Byzantine case study to demonstrate the interrelated nature of geopolitics, geoeconomics, and

⁴⁸ Stewart Gordon, *When Asia was the World: Traveling Merchants, Scholars, Warriors, and Monks who Created the 'Riches of the East'* (Philadelphia: De Capo Press, 2008).

geostrategy. Although this methodological approach is certainly not new, especially in the field of intelligence analysis, it is certainly not a usual approach in mainstream scholarship. A further contribution of originality comes from this dissertation using commonly available primary and secondary historical sources, in addition to mainstream geopolitical and economic development theory works.

By using these commonly available sources, this dissertation will show how scholarship can be revisited in order to facilitate a more thorough understanding of policy and strategy, akin to open source intelligence analysis.⁴⁹ The lofty goal, of this methodological approach is a marriage of policy analysis and scholarship toward a more refined approach to both. Moreover, the use of an historical case demonstrates how policy analysis logic may be applied to past examples to build a clearer picture of the present.

Chapter 2 draws heavily from the method of using imperial geographical theories and models already in place from aforementioned scholars such as Mackinder, Meinig, and Kearns. From there, primary and secondary Byzantine source analysis using archival research and cartographic review (for a more visually accessible take on the Byzantine sphere of influence) is used to determine how the Byzantine model does (or fails to) fit into the definition of empire as defined by previous imperial geographers. Moreover, Byzantine geopolitics is analyzed in this vein to determine how the Empire fits within these

⁴⁹ Christopher Brown-Seyd, "Library and Information Studies and Open Source Intelligence," *Library and Archival Security*, 24, 1 (31 March 2011), 1-8.

models. From this latter analysis, there is a segue into the field of comparative geography. Ch. 2 then questions what empires prior to, contemporary with, and following upon the Byzantine Empire were similar. Specific imperial case studies such as those done by Meinig and Spicer follow to this effect. Conveniently, these imperial geographers often use regional case studies in their own models, easing the acquisition of resources and contributing to the “open source intelligence” nature of this dissertation.

Chapter 3 uses similar methods in terms of confronting economic and historical development theory for its original contribution to this field of scholarship. The chapter explores longstanding theories of feudalism and European urbanization that ensue from the onset of the High Middle Ages, as articulated by scholars such as Henri Pirenne and Fernand Braudel. From there, the chapter explores the relationships of maritime trading powers in the Mediterranean Basin, limited by technology and environment. Specific attention is paid to the Byzantine Empire and Italian city-states. Not only does Ch. 3 argue against the Byzantine Empire’s direct and previously understated role in developing the Western European economy, it delves into scholarship on the Italian city-states and their indisputably crucial role of developing the Western European trade economy. Naturally, a thorough treatment of the Byzantine economy as related by Laiou and Morrisson is necessary to understand this interwoven relationship across the Mediterranean Sea. By utilizing this methodology, this dissertation illuminates how the Byzantine

Empire's conspicuous lack of coverage by modern scholars does little justice to the true narrative of European development.

Finally, Chapter 4's methodology takes a cumulative approach to the precedents set by the previous two chapters. By understanding imperial model and theory, and by understanding the geoeconomic importance of the Byzantine Empire, a clear picture can be painted of the vital importance of Byzantine Anatolia to the imperial government and all the powers with which it contended for hegemony over the peninsula. While rooted much more heavily in primary archival sources than the other articles, Ch. 4 nevertheless lends itself to previous geographical scholarship. Geostrategy cannot be defined without articulating the basis of human geography. Therefore, like the previous two chapters, a theoretical basis of the importance of location, water, and environment is set using the works of Semple and her predecessor-mentor, Friedrich Ratzel. Additionally, this chapter discusses secondary scholars to establish its claim of originality by delving directly into work from Karl Wittfogel, Warren Treadgold, and Edward Luttwak, who discuss Byzantine strategy at length though omit the important geographic element left unarticulated by primary sources.

Chapter 2

Of Environments and Emperors:

A Comparative Geopolitical Analysis of the Byzantine Empire

Introduction

Ellsworth Huntington's legacy in geographic determinism⁵⁰ stains with a conspicuous dark streak our contemporary sense of historical geography and its imperatives. How disturbing is it to be told that factors such as land and day-length and climate rule human behavior and determine social norms, obliterating choice and free-will. It is most certainly foolish, however, to deny any role in shaping human activities to biology or environmental conditions, whether the influence is over an individual or a collective society.

Seen from that vantage point, the behavior of groups of people may not necessarily be relegated to the fate of the land, although humanity and environment certainly interact with one another in complex ways. The relation between people and place, in terms of policy-making, may therefore be defined as geopolitics. Geopolitics has been recognized and resurgent since at least the end of the Cold War and still looms large in analysis and practice, as opposed to

⁵⁰ Ellsworth Huntington, *Mainsprings of Civilization* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1945), 16. This sentiment is best captured when Huntington states explicitly: "If appropriate conditions, both physical and biological, prevail over another long period, biological evolution will at length produce a being in whom reason triumphs over instinct. At that point cultural evolution begins."

political theory that is more purely based in ideology.^{51 52}

The importance of the geography in geopolitics is embodied in the popular scholarship of Robert Kaplan. A journalist (currently writing for *The Atlantic Monthly*) and sometime military consultant, Kaplan, like Nicholas Spykman, argues for the significance of features on land and sea, and speaks to their role on foreign policy and strategy.⁵³ This current dissertation chapter, “Of Emperors and Environments,” contends that the character of an empire has much to do with the fundamentals of geography — perhaps beyond landforms, and certainly including demography, politics, and economics — yet the physiognomy of place matters too. An imperial geography is revealed with the aforementioned geopolitical methodology, and empire shapes how the land that an empire rules is conquered, controlled, maintained, and — eventually — lost.

In name alone, the Byzantine Empire is telling. For most of its history, the Empire was an incredibly advanced civilization that stood in stark contrast to the gasping and grasping struggles of its neighbors. The Byzantine Empire would unabashedly use an historical glory gained through military⁵⁴ and diplomatic⁵⁵ means to accomplish its goals. Imperial glory was something more tangible than

⁵¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "A Geostrategy for Eurasia," *Foreign Affairs*, 76, no. 5 (1997): 50-64.

⁵² This stance is contrasted with mainstream scholarship of the Cold War, as embodied by the following citation and the authors within the volume. W.A. Douglas Jackson. *Politics and Geographic Relationships: Readings on the Nature of Political Geography*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 5.

⁵³ Robert D. Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us about Coming Conflicts and the Battle against Fate* (New York: Random House, 2012), 29-30.

⁵⁴ Warren Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army: 284-1081* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 213-214.

⁵⁵ Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2009), 123-126.

the symbolism of the Western Roman predecessor, despite this symbolism being evident throughout the Empire. Although cultural identity and social awareness are important in shaping historical legacy, they cannot be an end-all definition of the fearsome imperial title. Empire, instead, implies something of the might that lesser kingdoms and republics lack. Yet, the physical legacy, an imprint on the landscape, alludes to the nature of empire physiognomy and muscle-building.

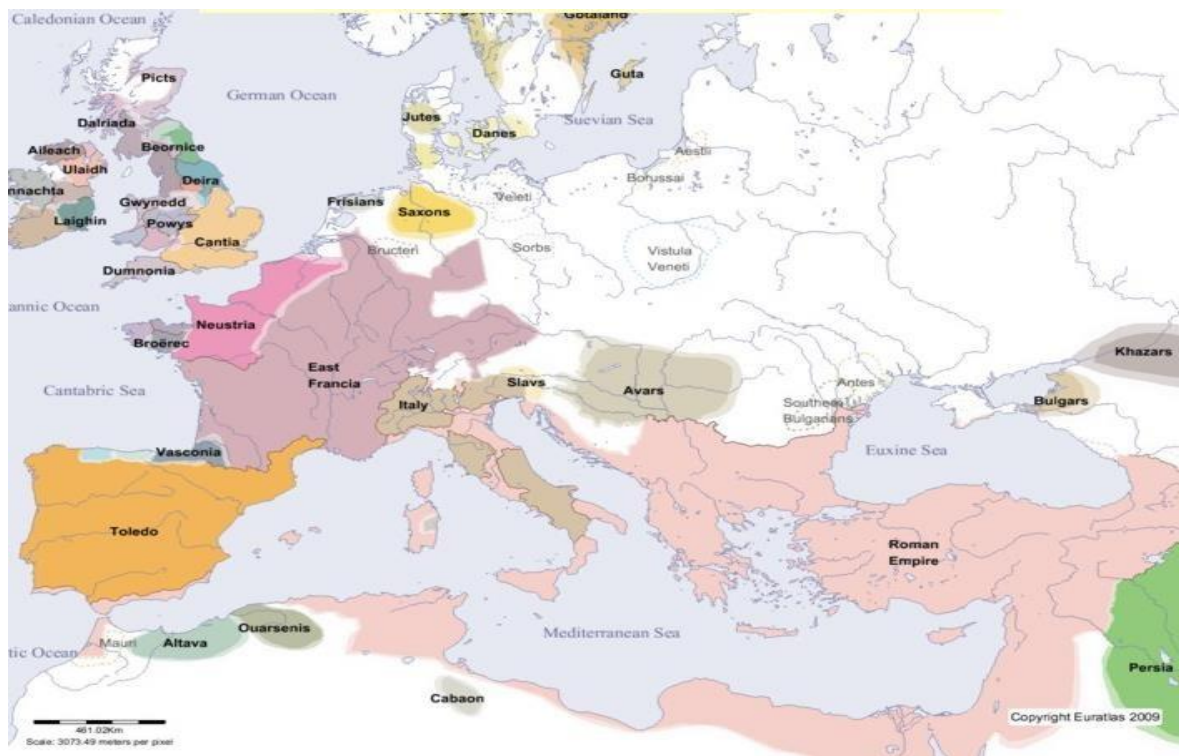


Figure 2.1: Europe and the Mediterranean in Seventh Century.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Euratlas. "Europe in Year 600." 2009. <http://www.euratlas.net/history/europe/600/index.html>.



Figure 2.2: Europe and the Mediterranean in the Eleventh Century.⁵⁷

Thesis

This article contends two major points. The first, through a methodological approach of previous imperial geographic studies, is that the Byzantine Empire is imperial in more than a titular sense. Using several scholarly criteria, the force of Byzantine imperial will on territories it controlled or sought to control directly or indirectly sets it apart from a state. It is indeed an empire. The second point is

⁵⁷ Euratlas. "Europe in Year 1000." 2009. <http://www.euratlas.net/history/europe/1000/index.html>.

made through a more regional and historical analysis. It shows Byzantine imperial power was focused on maritime and coastal control to establish a thalassocratic hegemony in the Mediterranean, and how this geopolitical control compares with similar empires throughout history. These two facets of Byzantine imperial geography ultimately highlight the nature of the Empire's "geoimperialism."

Defining Empire

Empire is ultimately a geopolitical concept. If the Byzantine Empire can be discussed as something more than a simple title, it must be defined as such from a geopolitical perspective. Historical geographers have fortunately obliged in this undertaking, and provided guidelines that overlap. This article, then, uses two criteria to determine if the Byzantine Empire was worthy of the title outside of historical succession. The first, as articulated by the geographer D.W. Meinig, defines empire by using six approaches to the geography of a society. Within these contexts, an empire engages in "the aggressive encroachment of one people upon the territory of another." He propounds empire as a geopolitical relationship, in this regard.⁵⁸ The second set invokes five guidelines set out in the work of Gerry Kearns, a late Twentieth Century historical geographer.⁵⁹ While these two models are specifically directed to the British and American Empires of

⁵⁸ D.W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective of 500 Years of History, Volume 1: Atlantic America, 1492-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), xvi-xviii.

⁵⁹ Gerry Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire: The Legacy of Halford Mackinder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.

the Modern Era, they remain universal enough in geopolitical principle to both serve as a separate test to Meinig's definition, while also demonstrating the geographical overlap in imperial discourse.

Meinig first argues that to understand the political context of an empire, it must be placed into a "geographic context" of its neighbors. From an expansionist perspective, this means an empire must exercise its authority in a hegemonic manner; to understand the geopolitics of an empire as it associates with its neighbors is to understand the empire itself.

A direct, military example of such a conquest is in evidence in the Eleventh Century at the end of the reign of Basil II. Responding to a war of aggression, the imperial rulers managed to annex the territory of Armenia through diplomatic coercion. This came in the wake of subsuming as vassals the population of the Kingdom of Georgia, which was the aggressor in the war. Thereafter, the Byzantine military maintained a presence in the borders of the protectorate and conquered territory alike. Additionally, the imperial military managed to subdue Serbia, Croatia, and Aleppo, pushing those powers into a similar protectorate status as Georgia, and gaining a formidable stronghold around the Eastern Mediterranean, Black Sea, and Adriatic Sea.⁶⁰ This imperialist behavior, though enforced by power, did not necessarily always require invasion. After the misfortune of the Battle of Manzikert, which reversed many of the aforementioned geopolitical gains, Emperor Manuel Komnenos once

⁶⁰ Treadgold (1995), 37-39.

again asserted Byzantine imperialism in an external context. Through marriage alliance, diplomacy, and imperial glory, Manuel Komnenos managed to gain suzerainty over both the Crusader States in the Near East and the Kingdom of Hungary — a long reach and extension of influence from a not necessarily propitious start.

Byzantine dominion was established in Eastern Europe and the Christian Near East, affecting local geopolitics of those realms, although the kingdoms were technically independent.⁶¹ Further indication of this regional context is the Venetian identity as a nominal Byzantine subject, a relationship understood and maintained until nearly the time of the Crusades, without any formal ceremony of establishment.⁶² Inversely, the prosperity of its Islamic neighbors often heralded a failure of imperial policy and decay of geopolitical control.⁶³ Byzantine imperialism, like the American counterpart Meinig studied, cannot be grasped without understanding the impact of its geopolitics on its neighbors.

⁶¹ John Kinnamos, translated by Charles Brand, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 32-36.

⁶² Frederic C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973), 2-5.

⁶³ Averil Cameron, *The Byzantines* (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 2009), 260-262.



Figure 2.3: Map of the tricontinental hub.⁶⁴ The approximate Byzantine imperial core is circled in purple.

A second step in deciphering the nature of imperial geography is to understand the “geographic coverage” of any empire in question. More on point, geopolitics should be analyzed as a whole, and simple domination in one particular region — whether by force, politics, or economics — is insufficient to hold territory together, in an imperial context. Rather, the empire must engage multiple fronts and spread its influence outward from the imperial core. It is here

⁶⁴ Modified. Original map: Tom Elliott. "Europe, North Africa, and West Asia: Physical Geography." University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. 2009. <http://awmc.unc.edu/wordpress/wpcontent/uploads/2012/09/eaaphysical.pdf>.

where the physical geography of the Byzantine Empire lends credibility to Huntington's thesis. Their empire was situated at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa, the Byzantine emperors evidently took an imperial approach to its coverage to ensure the survival of its core. Although I would not contend the Byzantine Empire was fated to be an empire, the opportunity to benefit itself economically by bridging these continents through imperial geopolitics was apparent even as early as Constantine's foundation of New Rome.⁶⁵ This society, deeply rooted in an antiquarian heritage stretching as far back as the Hellenic Golden Age, had a profound understanding of geography.⁶⁶ Regardless of their reasons to engage in imperial policy, the Byzantine shakers and movers nevertheless grasped the significance of the Near East as "one of the world's greatest crossroads,"⁶⁷ with all of the economic and strategic benefits and responsibilities attached. Most certainly, then, this physical location and imperial drive lent the Empire to be one of "a maritime character."⁶⁸ Meinig's third criterion is geographic scale. The scale of the Empire must manifest a dominance over the land it rules, and that land must be vast enough to include regions that

⁶⁵ This idea, however, was not a new one. The main capital of the Roman Empire during the era of the Tetrachs had shifted to Nikomedia, which was practically Byzantium's Asian parallel. However, the strategic planning and construction of Constantinople dwarfed even the geographic genius of the shift to Nikomedia. See: John Julius Norwich, *A Short History of Byzantium* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 3-5.

⁶⁶ Paul Magdalino, "Constantine VII and the Historical Geography of Empire," *Imperial Geographies in Byzantine and Ottoman Space* (Washington, D.C.: Harvard University Press, 2013), 23.

⁶⁷ George B. Cressey, *Crossroads: Land and Life in Southwest Asia* (Chicago: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1960), 23.

⁶⁸ Angeliki E. Laiou and Cécile Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 13.

require a strong, central identity to govern the people. In other words, the empire must rule over peoples who otherwise would have a collective identity of their own. This domination must pervade through political, religious, and educational control, among others. Evidence of an identity distinctly Byzantine as dominating over its many peoples and their lands comes as early as the shift from the Roman Empire to the Eastern Roman Empire. At its inception, the Byzantine Empire's inhabitants began to adopt a more and more Hellenic character.



Figure 2.4: An Eleventh Century depiction of the use of Greek Fire.⁶⁹

This process came to a head in the Seventh Century, when the Emperor Heraclius changed the official language from Latin to Greek. This change took

⁶⁹ Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. See: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f7/Greekfire-madridskylitzes1.jpg>. Greek Fire was one of the most effective and frightening means the Byzantine Empire used to maintain naval superiority. It is through this terrifying weapon often compared with napalm the Empire maintained its economic and military prosperity and security even during turbulent times. See also: Hilda Ellis Davidson, "The Secret Weapon of Byzantium," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 66 (1973), 6174.

effect as far away as Italy and Carthage. In addition, imperial administrations through the early centuries of the Empire sought to create something distinctly Greek and Christian in nature. As a result, many of the ancient institutions of learning were moved to Constantinople from older centers like Athens. Imperial control was easier in the new cities that revered a Greek heritage, but sought to disown its pagan glorifications. The result was an Empire that, by its own logic, glorified the ilk of Alexander and Caesar, who conquered the nations the Byzantine administrators utilized. Yet, at the same time, the early Byzantine emperors appealed to the blossoming force of Christianity.⁷⁰ This Hellenistic, Roman, and Christian identity endured even as the early Byzantine military vied against foes such as the Persians, Arabs, Armenians, and Slavs. These opponents, in turn, sought to establish and maintain their own identities in the contested imperial lands.⁷¹

Geographic structure, in the context of imperialism, breaks the empire down into parts within their varying geographic spheres of influence. This diffusion helps to gain a better understanding of the empire's geopolitics. This can be easy, according to Meinig, if examining formal federations or provinces. However, not every region, Meinig argues, is quite so formal. This is evident, of course, in the Middle Ages where universally agreed-upon borders and accurate

⁷⁰ Colin Wells, *Sailing from Byzantium: How a Lost Empire Shaped the World* (New York: Random House, 2006), 36-39.

⁷¹ Luttwak, 410-412.

maps were largely unknown to the medieval mind.⁷² Indeed, it was not until the Peace of Westphalia⁷³ that the idea of political borders, agreed upon by all concerned parties in the global theater, could be said to exist.⁷⁴ Indeed, to the Byzantine imperial structure, peoples were separated by the idea of nation — discrete people, affiliated by language or religion or tribe or clan — yet factually a part of one governing political state. This meant there were those in the world around the Romans whose administrators spoke Greek (or in the case of the early Byzantine Empire, Latin as well) and were Christian. These nations were therefore subjects of the emperor. Then there were the barbarians who did not fit this category. These barbarian nations, nevertheless, were studied closely for their strengths and weaknesses to the benefit of the divinely anointed emperor, who had the right to reign over all.⁷⁵

It is through this formalized, documented idea of divine right and superiority that the Byzantine imperial geopolitical structure is best understood. Among the diverse subjects of the emperor and beyond, the Byzantine administrations believed, and were in turn supported, in their rule over the lands and peoples they did because God willed it so. In turn, “expansion” to other

⁷² O.A.W. Dilke, “Cartography in the Byzantine Empire,” *The History of Cartography, Volume 1*, edited by J.B. Harley and David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 258-275.

⁷³ The Peace of Westphalia, concluding the Eighty Years' War, was completed in AD 1648.

⁷⁴ John Merriman. *A History of Modern Europe from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2004), 169.

⁷⁵ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, translated by R.J.H. Jenkins, *De Administrando Imperio* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1967), 45-47.

nations, like the empires of the Modern Era,⁷⁶ was a matter of civilization. The individual realms subordinate to the Byzantine Empire were laid low at the behest of the emperor, who was God's temporal agent on Earth. Each place was conquered (or reconquered) for its own sake and for the sake of God's chosen Empire. The Empire, keeping with Meinig's view of geographic structure, was justified in Aristotelian thought: the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

From this division in geographic structures, Meinig contends in the imperial setting, geographic tensions can often ensue. In an empire, there must be a core, usually urban, which has to benefit from some level of geographic, political, and economic exploitation of the periphery. In the case of the Byzantine Empire, though, which was far more broadly urbanized than any other political state in the region, there still remained an indisputable core. Constantinople itself was the vibrant envy of the known world in terms of wealth, trade, and glory. Other cities and hinterlands of the Empire were indisputably subordinate, acknowledging a symbolic, yet also genuine, absolute authority of the emperor represented by capital city.⁷⁷ This relationship was not the typical feudal hierarchy with vassals serving vassals. Although a complex bureaucracy existed in the Byzantine Empire, all served, in theory, at the will of the emperor.

⁷⁶ Anne Godlewska, "Napoleon's Geographers (1797-1815): Imperialists and Soldiers of Modernity," *Geography and Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 32-33.

⁷⁷ Karl Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 170.

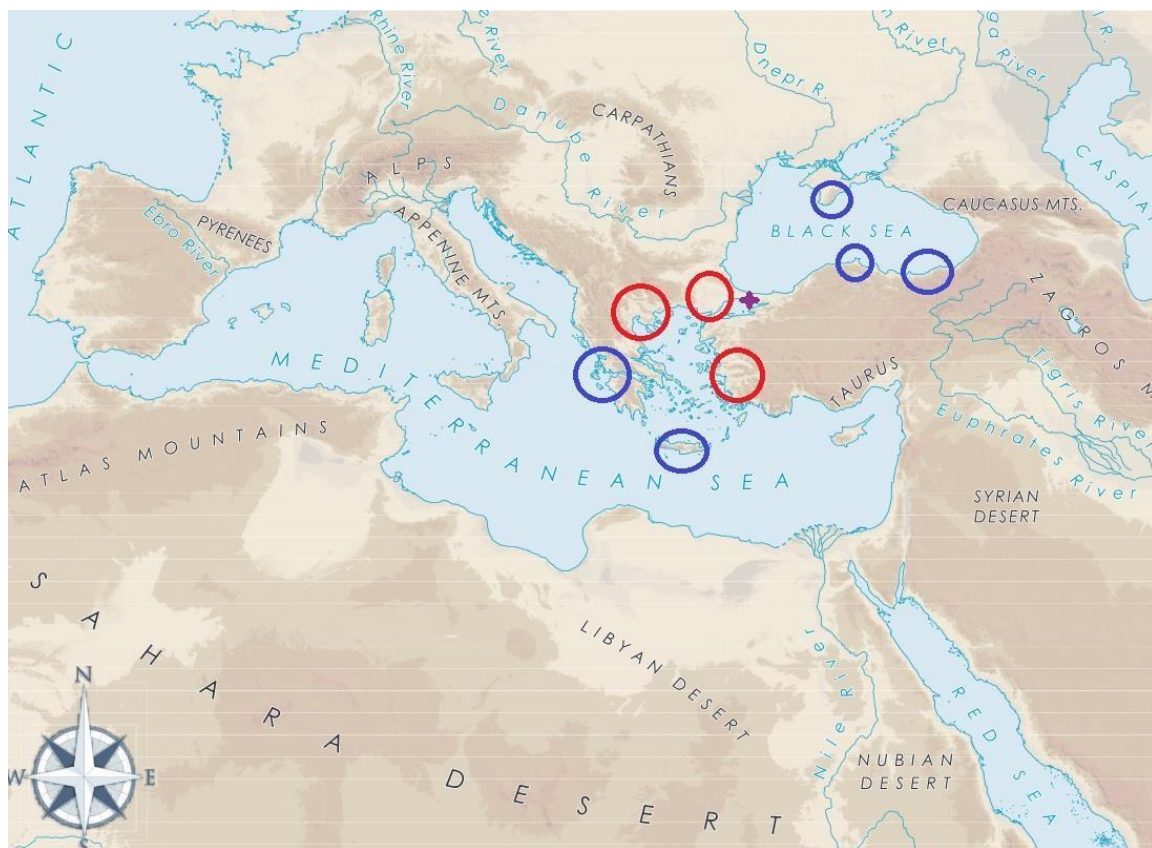


Figure 2.5: The imperial core and periphery of the Twelfth Century.⁷⁸

Constantinople in purple. Approximate major agricultural support areas circled in red. Approximate major trade support hubs circled in blue.

This model of governance served the Byzantine Empire generally well, given its astounding longevity. Yet, the model was not without fault. Specific instructions exist in dealing with routine rebellions — how to put them down, combat them, and thrive, despite the lack of resources gained from the revolting

⁷⁸ Modified. Original map: Tom Elliott. "Europe, North Africa, and West Asia: Physical Geography." University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. 2009. <http://awmc.unc.edu/wordpress/wpcontent/uploads/2012/09/eaaphysical.pdf>.

provinces.⁷⁹ This relationship of subordinate lands to the imperial city relied on a strong emperor with sufficient resources to maintain control. As the geographer Gray Brechin argues in the context of Nineteenth Century San Francisco, California, the imperial city must provide sufficient protection and trade benefit to maintain harmonious relationships with the hinterlands it exploits. When the clarity of this central power wanes, so too does the sense of dominion of the people outside the city.⁸⁰ Constantinople was no different: when foreign invaders, failed campaigns, or civil war wracked the empire, the provinces would claim the end of the divine right of the emperor. Those culturally different may separate, whereas those closer to the imperial core may have claimed God favored their stewardship of the Byzantine Empire, rather than the incumbent ruler.

In the greater continuity of the Empire these revolts routinely failed in favor of a restoration of order. However, provinces like Cyprus and Trebizond stand as examples of geographical tensions the Empire's forces could not combat successfully.⁸¹ Yet, the imperial government managed most geographical tensions within its borders well, while still maintaining a clear bias to the capital. It proved adaptable.

⁷⁹ Porphyrogenitus, 285-287.

⁸⁰ Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), xxxi.

⁸¹ Norwich 296-297, 307-308.

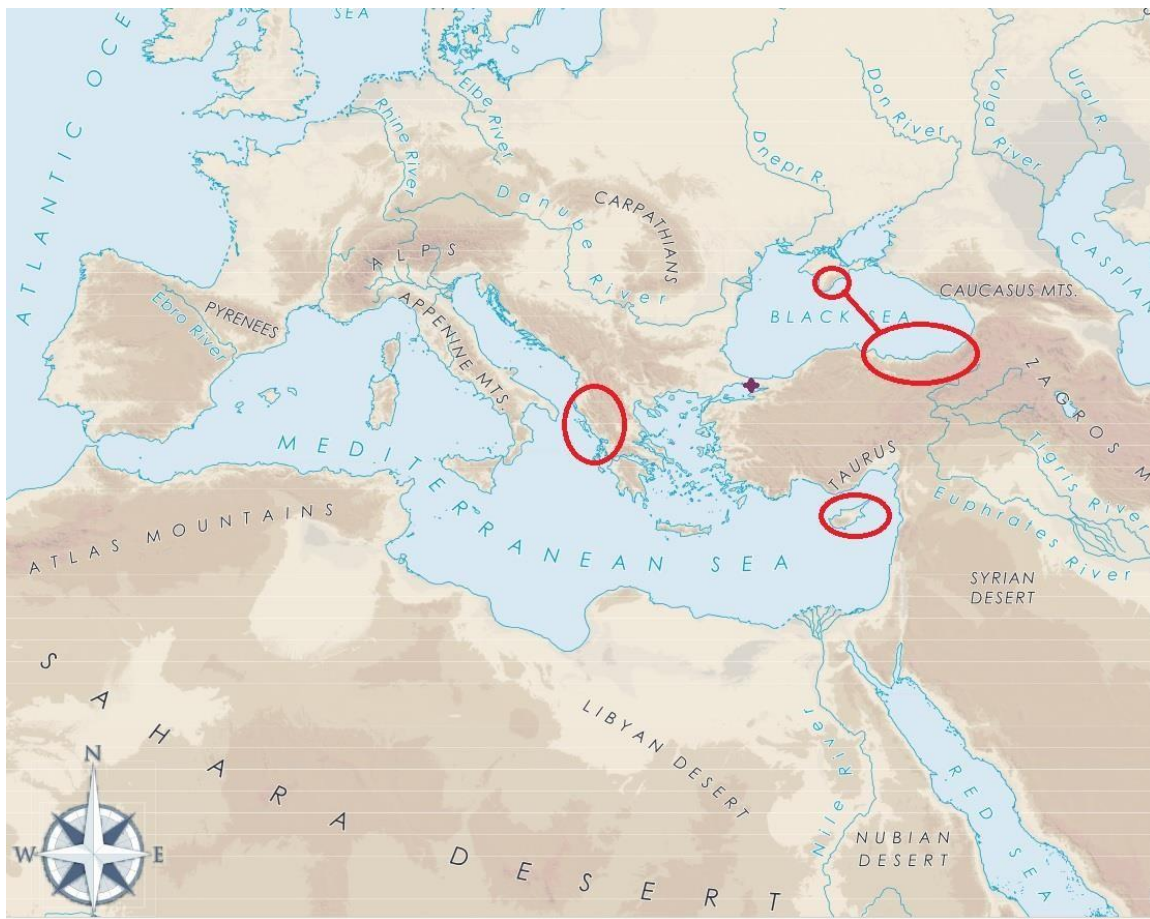


Figure 2.6: Separatist territories ruled by Byzantine administrators.⁸²

Constantinople in purple. Pretender regime territories in red.

In the spirit of this adaptability, Meinig's final scope of studying a place is its change over time. In his analysis of the United States, Meinig argues consistent change alters the human geography of the United States. In an imperial context, the case cannot be stagnant to be an empire. Internally, this

⁸² Modified. Original map: Tom Elliott. "Europe, North Africa, and West Asia: Physical Geography." University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. 2009. <http://awmc.unc.edu/wordpress/wpcontent/uploads/2012/09/eaaphysical.pdf>. From left to right, the territories depicted which remained separate from rule in Constantinople during the Crusades period are the Despotate of Epirus, Cyprus, and the Empire of Trebizond.

means policies must consistently seek an imperial geographic coverage. Externally, the empire must engage in campaigns for the sake of its scale, even if those campaigns are not necessarily successful. From this perspective, the Byzantine Empire's title is never in doubt. Whether on the defense or offense, it consistently engaged in military and diplomatic operations to assert regional dominance. A technological edge, particularly as manifest in the Byzantine Navy, proved to be a key asset in maintaining the character of empire, particularly in terms of preserving order and precluding major change.⁸³ The imperial government still retained a sense of divine superiority in geographic structure, even during dark times and receding boundaries. Despite the constant conflict on either frontier of the Empire, even if only engaged in border skirmishes, the Byzantine administration still sought to establish superiority through all geopolitical means available. This meant a reliance on pursuing a strategy against total war, lest the disaster of the end of the Sassanian War and a resurgence and expansion of Islam to ensue once again.⁸⁴

To accomplish a goal without losing the dynamic essence required to be an empire, the Byzantine administrations pursued a number of alternatives to total war. First, a logistical preparedness for such a war was maintained within the core of the Empire to the best of its ability. Second, the most sophisticated

⁸³ John Pryor, *Geography, Technology, and War: Studies in the Maritime History of the Mediterranean, 649-1571* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 59-60.

⁸⁴ Geoffrey Regan, *First Crusader: Byzantium's Holy Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 153-157.

intelligence network for the time was utilized by the emperor to both know the enemy and provide early warning capabilities. A formalized, small, active-duty force was maintained by the imperial administration specifically for the purpose of aiding the intelligence network. Additionally, the imperial military used physical features heavily to ensure even an outnumbered force could still devastate the opposition. Politically, a conscious effort was maintained by administrations to keep a large alliance network growing during times of conflict to change the balance of power in the Empire's favor. Bribery, diplomacy, and clandestine operations were also used liberally to facilitate the growth of this network. Finally, attrition-based operations were used by the often defensive Byzantines who sought always to ensure the whole of their force was never fully revealed to the enemy.⁸⁵ Even in this seemingly defensive and subtle strategy, the Byzantine Empire showed geographic change befitting its title.

Meinig's method of regional analysis shows the Byzantine Empire to be certainly an exceptional force in the medieval world. By current standards, however, the level of strife with the Empire appalls political sensibility. Yet, given its relative stability and definitive longevity compared to its European and Islamic neighbors. Its imperial success is self-evident when viewing its geopolitical character in Meinig's six criteria. However, for the Byzantine Empire to be called such, it must stand the test of being like other empires throughout history. It cannot stand on its merits alone and receive the title like an award simply

⁸⁵ Luttwak, 415-417.

because it doubled the longevity of the Roman civilization, which started the title of empire.

From this perspective, Gerry Kearns's criteria for defining empire are most useful. Kearns overtly states his five factors of imperial analysis are hallmark traits of the two most successful empires of the Modern Era, the American and British. His criteria, complementing Meinig's, trend on the more political side of geopolitical imperial analysis.

As Mackinder argued, politics are comprised of history, which shapes a people's character, as well as decisions guided by economical wants and geographical opportunities.⁸⁶ Although the geopolitical context of the modern empire compared to the medieval are vastly different, there is only a slight geographical and political alteration needed to apply this imperial geopolitical methodology to the Byzantine case. Namely, where global hegemony is concerned, the strategic scope should be narrowed to a regional one. After all, to the Byzantine mindset, its Empire stood at the center of the known world. Moreover, through God's favor, the emperors ruled the majority of this known world. Additionally, the paradigms of a civilizing mission should be more focused on religious conversion and bringing the conquered closer to God by virtue of a Byzantine administration and infrastructure.

Kearns argues a sense of crisis requiring an aggressive reaction is the

⁸⁶ Halford Mackinder, "The Physical Basis of Political Geography," *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 6 (1890), 84.

basis for the empire. This crisis must be geopolitical in nature and cannot be answered with isolationism. Rather, the empire must engage the region it seeks to conquer for its own sake and/or the sake of the realm in question. From the early centuries of the Byzantine Empire, crisis was evident. The heartland of Roman civilization was in the hands of foreign barbarians, though the East was illequipped in its early years of total independence in the wake of the West's conquest to act. Yet, once stability was attained, and Constantinople showed its own merits and power independent from Rome, the imperial reconquest ensued shortly thereafter in the reign of Justinian I. This gain was the largest in Byzantine history. It allowed the imperial government to set a precedence for being involved in realms well outside of its borders.⁸⁷ In doing so, the precedence would be set for the next millennium — the imperial administration would never have a shortage of crises to which it would need to respond. Isolation, given its involvement in geopolitical hotspots in the Balkans, Asia, and Italy, in particular, was impossible. Even as the Empire approached its closing centuries, its rulers would still openly use their influence, even if not militarily, to respond to perceived crises, as embodied by the Sicilian Vespers conflict.⁸⁸ The emperor never lacked a just cause to enter in war among its people. The imperial administration viewed itself as

⁸⁷ Norwich, 66-67.

⁸⁸ The Sicilian Vespers 1282 was a Byzantine and Aragonese prompted revolt of the island from Sicily from the Kingdom of Naples. It showed even in the decline after the Fourth Crusade, the Byzantine Empire was still a very active imperial player in Mediterranean politics capable of intervening well beyond its borders using wealth, subterfuge, espionage, and diplomacy. See: Norwich, 328-329.

God's chosen, and the Empire was a most holy one by virtue of its geography. Any threat, real or perceived, was worthy of action, even if that action was not necessarily military in nature.

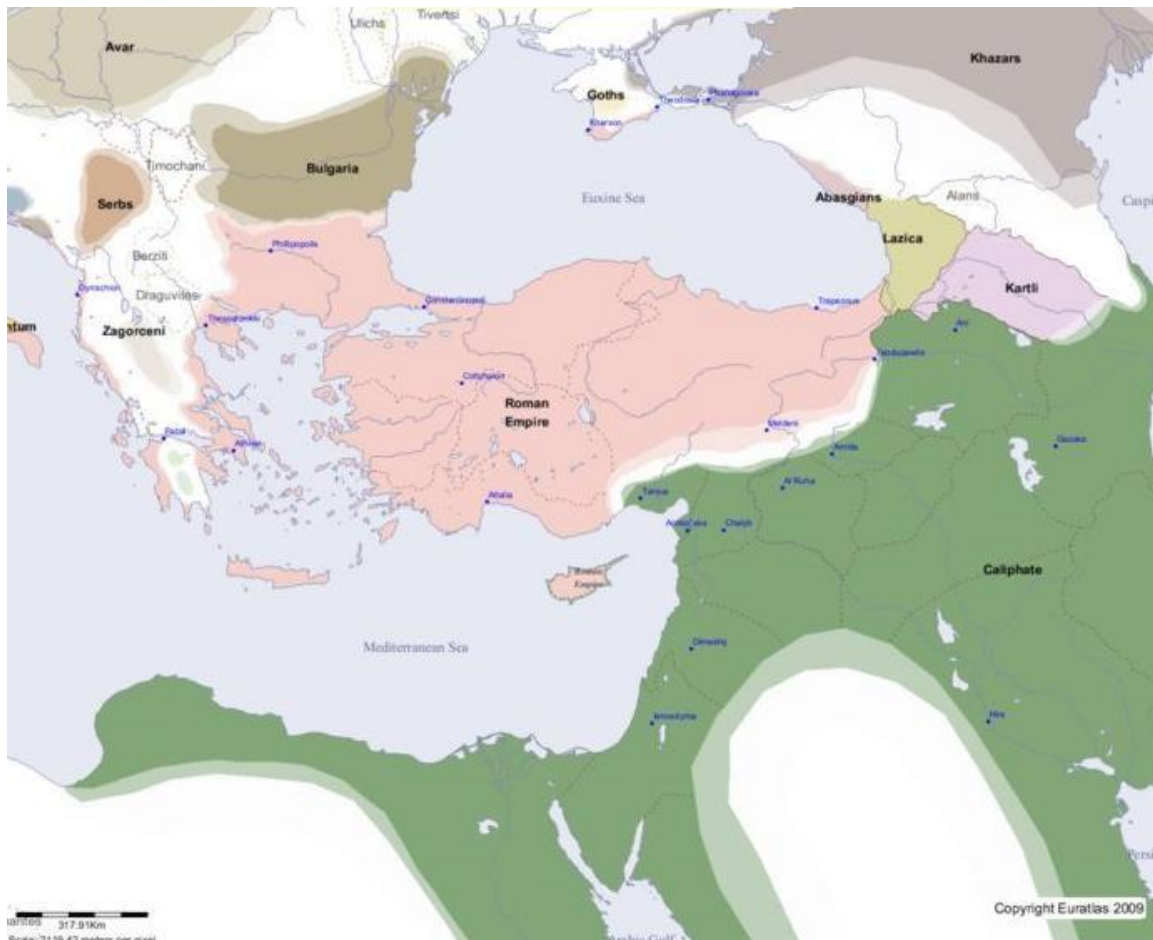


Figure 2.7: The Byzantine Empire in the Eighth Century.⁸⁹

During this period, all direct neighbors of the Byzantine Empire, spare the Goths of Crimea and the Caucasus kingdoms, were embroiled in armed conflict with the Byzantine Empire. Kearns argues that the United States and United

⁸⁹ Euratlas. "Europe 700 Southeast."

http://www.euratlas.net/history/europe/700/700_Southeast.html.

Kingdom used a racist basis in differing their civilizations from the rest of the world. While the concept of race as an inherently biological difference was not prevalent in the Byzantine Empire, there certainly was an element of religious and civilizational superiority that was pervasive among the rulers of the Hellenic Christians. The Byzantine Empire was the shamelessly proud continuation of the forces of civilization, after all. It was the geographic, cultural, historical, and religious successor of the realms that started the ideas of virtuous governance and respected education in the West, the Roman tradition of civility and honor, and the monotheism and morality of the Abrahamic tradition.



Figure 2.8: The Byzantine reconquest of the Western Empire under Justinian I. The dark shade represents imperial territory, whereas the light is vassal states.⁹⁰

Naturally, the imperial rulers shunned all things viewed as barbarian: namely, whatever it was not. This rejection included the ‘Latin’ realms of the West

⁹⁰ Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. See: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9b/Justinian555AD.png>

who claimed equally to be successors of some, if not all of these ideas. Of course, this rhetoric was utilized carefully, given the government's reliance on diplomacy in its strategy. However, within the imperial administration, this sense of superiority endured proudly even when the barbarians fought on the side of the Byzantine Empire and served a profound usefulness. A distinct example of this sort of xenophobia is evident in Anna Komnene's work, who places the aiding Crusaders into the category of all barbarians, and dismisses them as untrustworthy.⁹¹ Even in a diplomatic administrative manual, the reminder of the importance of the office of emperor, second only to God, is given to Romanos, son of Constantine VII. Although the manual attempts to be objective as possible to ensure a wise and mighty governance, it is still rooted in the basis of the Byzantine Empire being above all other nations, selected specifically by God.⁹² To the commanders, soldiers, and populace requiring a justification for imperial expansion, the will of God and Roman imperial superiority were the most effective tools of political mobilization.

Kearns states the empire must have an approach firmly committed to the absolute nature and realities of the use of force as an end-all that asserts imperial dominance. Moreover, the use of force is inevitable to any empire in question — how it conducts itself prior shows its moral righteousness, prudent

⁹¹ "That is the way of all barbarians: their mouths gape wide for gifts and money, but they have no intention whatever of doing the things for which the money is offered." Anna Komnene, translated by E.R.A. Sewter, *The Alexiad* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2009), 405.

⁹² Porphyrogenitus, 47.

strategizing and overall preparedness, and its general warfighting capability. In keeping with the cultural character of the Byzantine Empire, as mentioned above, it saw itself as the continuation of millennia of Roman and Hellenic tradition. By extension, use and refinement of ancient tactics, strategies, and technologies was generally welcomed by the Byzantines in their employment of forces. The Byzantine Empire was, like its Greco-Roman predecessors, in a generally consistent state of imperial-scale conflict. Victory from this conflict equated to honor and prestige for the rulers and commanders, which benefitted them domestically. This victory was seen as a divine duty, for the temporal agent of God, the emperor, benefited himself, his Empire, and his God when "...foes fall before his face, and enemies lick the dust."⁹³ As a result, the inevitability of war was adopted in Byzantine diplomatic practice.

Peace was an alternative to war: peace bought the necessary time to prepare for a war that would be won with minimal resource expenditure and ingenious strategy and tactics. These strategies and tactics would be refined through this intellectual succession, increasing geopolitical intelligence, employment of the proper technologies and weapons, and proper use of terrain.⁹⁴ Coinciding with policy and strategy being so closely tied to one another in the Byzantine Empire, the Army and the government were reliant upon one another, acting as a balance for a sophisticated, professional system. This system was

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Luttwak, 235-236.

conducive to the Byzantine policy of diplomacy as an alternative to war. The soldiery, unlike most militaries of the time, was paid by precious metal. The active and reserve forces were kept at a sizeable number. The imperial administration and army relied on one another for direction. By no means, however, was this relationship perfect. The two acted as a check on one another, preventing tyrannical exercises of power through either economic or violent means, respectively. While this policy was not always successful, it served to create a militant state structure constantly prepared for war, even in the most tumultuous times domestically.⁹⁵

The model Kearns proposes deviates from the Byzantine case when he discusses the idea of the empire as one politically sophisticated in its relationship to the lands it conquers. First, Kearns argues the empire is global in nature. Second, an empire basks in an innate moral and cultural superiority through a domestic discourse of peacefulness and democracy, in contrast to every other power in the world. In the case of the former, one must remember a global geographical understanding was not what it is today. In the Byzantine mind, the Empire straddled the center of the world and was disproportionately large and dominant; even the territories it did not hold directly were still geopolitically subordinate to the divinely anointed Byzantine Empire, with its orbit of Constantinople. The imperial reach extended to the farthest reaches of the Mediterranean, into the Black Sea, and down to the Red Sea, to say nothing of

⁹⁵ Treadgold (1995), 187-189.

the Empire's economic and diplomatic influence out as far as China.⁹⁶

In the case of cultural values the hegemon is supposed to impose on its mission of civility, the Byzantine Empire does not apply. The paradigm of democracy as it is understood in the Modern Era context simply did not exist during any period of the Byzantine Empire. However, the same values given to the above criterion discussing imperial supremacy applies to the paradigms of the Middle Ages. The Byzantine Empire's rulers viewed their realm as divinely supreme and the guardian against the anarchic and destructive barbarian forces in the world. This identity inspired a divine mission both defensive and offensive in nature among the populace of the Byzantine Empire.

Even, if in reality, the imperial government acted in self-defense or self-perpetuation against the hordes of barbarians, to Byzantine imperial decision makers, the Empire was the bulwark of defense for all of Christendom and civilization. For the duration of the Byzantine Empire's history, the emperor and his forces defended and conquered the past, present, and future alike in imperial military campaigns. These operations served to propagate and preserve civilization and Christianity alike.⁹⁷

From Kearns's perspective of the modern British and American empires, the very same Western values they were spreading were those of the Byzantine Empire. Those values, however, had not reached the 'apogee' of the Modern Era

⁹⁶ Dimiter Angelov, "Asia and Europe Commonly Called East and West," *Imperial Geographies in Byzantine and Ottoman Space* (Washington, D.C.: Harvard University Press, 2013) 59-62.

⁹⁷ Luttwak, 410-412.

that had transformed into the ideas of liberty, democracy, and equality. Most certainly, though, like the modern periods, the Byzantine imperial administration certainly deviated from the peacefulness, civility, and Christian-nature of their superior rhetoric in their practice and implementation of imperial geopolitics. Finally, and perhaps bearing most significantly on the political identity of an empire, Kearns argues the empire must have an innate belief in its ability to potentially rule the world and last eternally. Once again, the caveat of the known world to the Byzantine Empire must apply in its case analysis. During this medieval period heavily reliant on agriculture for income and sustenance, the abundance of arable land played a heavy role in prosperity.⁹⁸ For the Byzantine Empire, specifically, the abundance of coastal land, for the trade and maritime resource it yielded, coastal land was doubly important to hold.⁹⁹ Unsurprisingly, the Byzantine Empire's success was tied to the amount of land, specifically land with coastal access. Economic prosperity, increased education, quality of art, religious and political stability, and military victory were tied to the increase of the land ruled by the Byzantine Empire.¹⁰⁰

Although no Byzantine emperor ever spelled out a Napoleonic-style ambition to subdue the known world, the Byzantine imperial character, plan, and action indicates an undying imperial ambition. Under both Meinig's and Kearns's

⁹⁸ Gregory Clark, *A Farewell to Alms: A Brief Economic History of the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 24.

⁹⁹ Laiou and Morrisson, 13-15.

¹⁰⁰ Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 7-9.

criteria, the Byzantine Empire, by the time Christianity was adopted by Theodosius I, established methods for subduing the land and peoples they viewed as subject to the rulers' divine right. Therefore, to the Byzantine imperial administrator's mind, no matter how bleak the circumstances, there lingered to the bitter end the hope that Roman civilization would endure and expand, as it had in the past, for the sake of God and the world.

Comparative Imperial Models

To determine the fit of the Byzantine Empire into an articulated geopolitical nature of an empire, the nature of geopolitical dominance must be understood. To do so, the Byzantine Empire must be compared to other imperial powers. Direct comparisons are needed in terms of these geopolitics to discover if the Byzantine model was unique. Additionally, comparison with other powers helps to illuminate further the geopolitics of the Byzantine Empire from a scholarly perspective. There cannot be any exact match to the Byzantine imperial geography model, given its peculiar historical and economic character.¹⁰¹ However, the geopolitical reasoning of the imperial administrators, educated in geography, strategy, and history themselves, could not have come up with their methods *ex nihilo*. The Empire's geopolitical traits are present, to some extent, in other empires with prior to, during, and after the Byzantine era.

The promise of lucrative trade in the eastern Mediterranean Basin, which

¹⁰¹ Laiou and Morrisson, 242-243

was far more urbanized than the western half, was not unknown to the rapidly expanding Roman Republic and later Empire. The promise of breadbaskets throughout the Fertile Crescent to feed the hungry people and soldiery, coupled with the taxation opportunities of the Hellenistic trade network to feed the hungry Senate, was irresistible to the glory-seeking imperators. Rome, and more specifically the Western Roman Empire, was geographically different from the Eastern Empire. Although this statement seems obvious, given their locations, it has geopolitical implications. This allure affected the economy and political nature of the Byzantine Empire, distinguishing it from the Western Empire. Culturally, the Byzantine Empire shifted with its economic and geopolitical shift. It was more urbanized on coastal bodies of water, it was built on the foundations of far more absolutist societies than its Roman Republic roots, and it interacted with the more urbanized and economically advanced powers of the Orient, as opposed to invading nomads. Accordingly, the Byzantine Empire developed into a power reliant upon access to water and networks between cities far more than the more agriculturally-based Western Roman Empire.¹⁰² The Byzantine Empire was dissimilar from its pagan predecessor. The shift of Christianity and the economy changed it geopolitically necessitating a reformation of the military from its inception.¹⁰³ Unique to its time in late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, the Byzantine Empire experienced a profound change in strategy and policy that

¹⁰² Wittfogel, 170-174.

¹⁰³ Treadgold (1995), 98-101.

coincided with an economic paradigm shift gradually increasingly toward trade.¹⁰⁴

In an ironic twist of history, one of the historical examples of a power geopolitically similar to the Byzantine Empire is the Carthaginian Republic, which met its height in the Third Century BC. Like its Byzantine counterpart, it was increasingly reliant on trade, as opposed to agriculture, for its practical economic prosperity. Agricultural economy was subject to Carthage, in accordance with the Brechin model of imperial cities. Power, like the Byzantine Empire, was absolute; the individual inhabitants and conquered peoples were totally subject to the rulers of Carthage and their gods. Influence in this absolutist system was not necessarily hereditary, like the Byzantine Empire, but rather a factor of controlling property, trade, and military power. Like the Byzantine Empire, these power bases could challenge the established dynasties.¹⁰⁵ Carthaginian expansion, like Byzantine expansion, was focused on securing the Mediterranean Basin for economic domination. Additionally, as with the reconquest efforts of Justinian and Basil II, there was an inclination toward securing islands. Inland expansion does not occur in major agricultural production areas, but instead for a strategy that protects the geopolity. Major Carthaginian conquest efforts inland, like the Byzantine, are based on creating a buffer around economically vital cities.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Giovanni Ridolfi, "Approach to the Geostrategy of the Oceans: the Case of the Mediterranean," *Ocean and Coastal Management*, 18 (1992), 291-306.

¹⁰⁵ Wittfogel, 263.

¹⁰⁶ Richard Smith, *Premodern Trade in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 64-66.

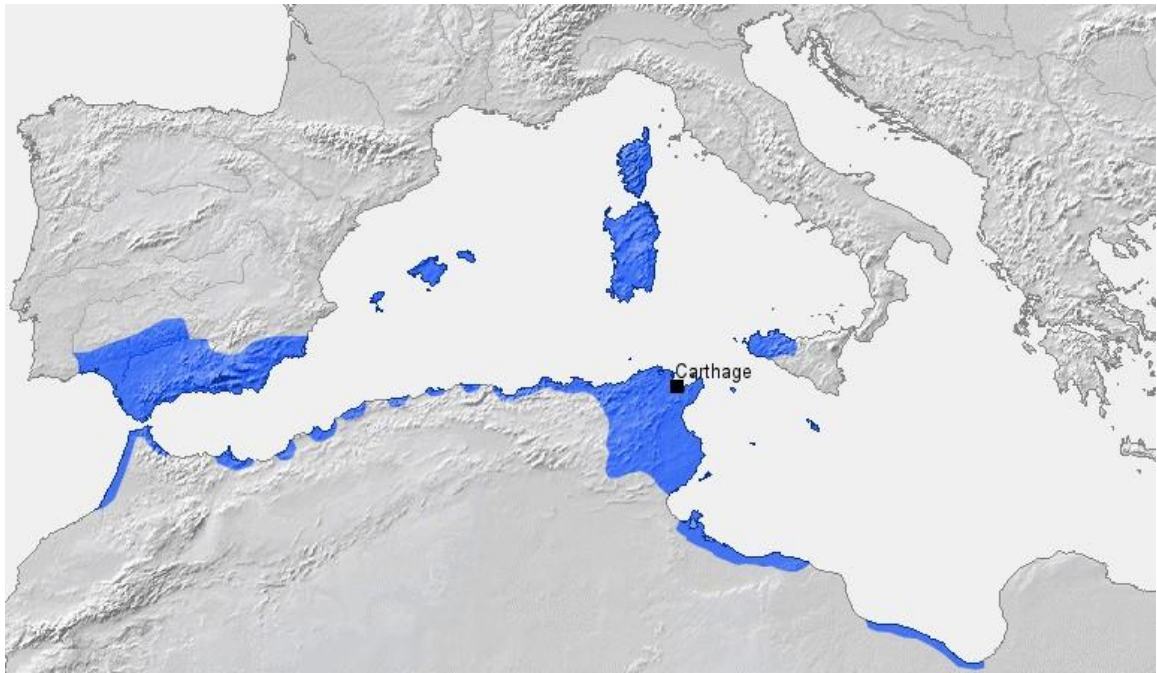


Figure 2.9: The Carthaginian Republic at its height.¹⁰⁷

Tracing a pattern in many ways similar to the Carthaginian model was the Islamic Caliphate, which was built directly upon formerly Byzantine realms during the early stages of its conquest. Like its Byzantine territorial predecessor, the Islamic powers of the Mediterranean were far more focused on trade than the settling nomadic Germans of Western Europe.¹⁰⁸ So too did their patterns of conquest follow largely along Byzantine lines. Indeed, their frontiers into the Iberian Peninsula, like the Byzantine Empire, were eerily similar to those of the trading Carthaginian Republic.¹⁰⁹ This maritime trading character in the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa endured well into the Ottoman period, which built

¹⁰⁷ Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. See: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/44/CarthageMap.png>.

¹⁰⁸ Pryor, 102-106.

¹⁰⁹ Xavier de Planhol, *The World of Islam* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957), 113-114.

itself on the geopolitical model and frontiers of the Byzantine Empire. It manifested as a trading power reaching far outward, potentially even seeking conquest to the Indian Ocean.¹¹⁰ Yet, the campaigns inland to Europe far beyond merely buffering its sensitive trading cities set the Ottoman Empire strategically apart from the Byzantine, despite its directly geographical origins. Unlike the Byzantine Empire, however, its decline coincided not with its loss of coastal land, but of agricultural. Ultimately, it is the cultural and historical contexts mentioned by Mackinder that set the world of the Byzantine Empire distinctly apart from Islam.

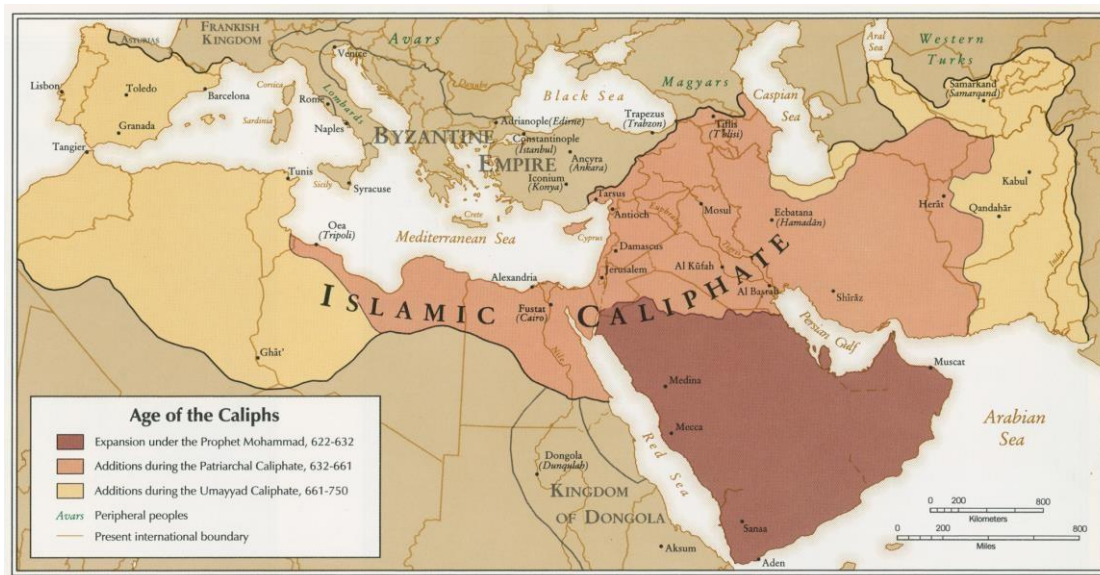


Figure 2.10: The Rashidun Caliphate.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Dimitris Kastritsis, "Feridun Beg's Correspondence of Sultans and Late Sixteenth Century Ottoman Views of the Political World," *Imperial Geographies in Byzantine and Ottoman Space* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 91-94.

¹¹¹ Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. See: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/16/Age_of_the_Caliphs_%282709972663%29.jpg

Unsurprisingly, the contemporary powers comparable to the Byzantine Empire's geopolitical model were active and dangerous rivals. An example was the Norman Kingdom that expelled Byzantine rule from its last toehold in the Italian peninsula. Its model of expansion focused on gaining coastal territories to include Sicily, North Africa, and even an attempt at sweeping up holdings of the Byzantine Empire itself across the Adriatic Sea.¹¹² Indeed it was these seafaring Normans who were responsible for the initial setup of the newfound Crusader states after the success of the First Crusade.¹¹³ Yet, unlike the Byzantine Empire, the Norman model of geopolitics lacked the centralization of the Byzantine Empire. As it became woven into different royal European noble families, its frontiers across the Mediterranean were rendered vulnerable — Sicily, Naples, and Antioch became fringe provinces of larger kingdoms, and the core moved away from the Mediterranean, absorbed by agricultural Western Europe.

The complicated web of the Crusade period between the Byzantine Empire and the West is further evident by the Republic of Venice, who too played a role in the setup of these Crusader States. These three powers served as opponents and allies to one another amid historical circumstance. Venice's empire, like the Norman, was set up on conquest of Byzantine and Islamic holdings.

¹¹² David Abulafia, "The Norman Kingdom of Africa and the Norman Expeditions to Majorca and the Muslim Mediterranean." *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 7 (1985), 26-49.

¹¹³ Komnene, 315.



Figure 2.11: Norman dominions of the Mediterranean.¹¹⁴ All Norman ruled territories are in black. The Kingdom of Africa is outlined in Red.

The Fourth Crusade allowed Venice to replace the Byzantine Empire as the dominant sea power of the Mediterranean. The medieval Venetian geopolitical model is visually similar to the Byzantine Empire not simply for the territory it inhabits, but for its concentration along coasts. However, the imperial expansion and buffer of lands set Venice apart. It was, after all, a trading republic and not an empire. Its focus of expansion, which ended up being the undoing of its holdings, was commercial bases of trade, retained long after the posts across

¹¹⁴ Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. See: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cd/Regnonormanno1160.jpg>.

the Mediterranean failed.¹¹⁵ There was no need for the administrators of Venice to seek the same imperial control as their Byzantine counterpart.



Figure 2.12: The Republic of Venice.¹¹⁶ Map shows all territories which were, at one point, under Venetian control. Direct control is in dark orange. Vassal states are highlighted in light orange.

Conclusion

In contemporary terms, the Byzantine Empire's geopolitical model is a combination of two major facets. Culturally, it relies on a despotic model in accordance with Wittfogel's thesis. The Byzantine government's central control must be powerful enough to facilitate its trade economy strictly to the advantage of the Empire itself. Geographically, this is accomplished by the Byzantine

¹¹⁵ Lane, 38-40.

¹¹⁶ Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. See: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/39/Venezianische_Kolonien.png

Empire, like the colonial empires of the early Modern Era, by acquiring, maintaining, and defending coastal cities and the hinterlands that support them. To the Byzantine rulers, like the modern imperialist power, to do so would offer seamless access to established trading networks and raw materials. In this regard, the Byzantine Empire was a seafaring power, necessitated by its location and economy, in the spirit of Alfred Mahan.¹¹⁷ It was, at a regional scale, a proponent of Spykman's "rimland" theory of geopolitics.¹¹⁸

By examining Byzantine regional primary and secondary sources through imperial geographic criteria as proposed by scholars like Meinig, Kearns, Kaplan, and Wittfogel, it becomes indeed clear that the Byzantine Empire's title was far more than merely a succession of earlier Western Roman heritage. The Byzantine Empire, similar to other maritime powers throughout history, imposed its economic, strategic, and political will by sea and land, with a preference toward the former for economic purposes, throughout the whole of the Mediterranean. This thalassocratic imperial nature is directly related to the phenomenal longevity and enduring historical legacy of the Byzantine Empire.

¹¹⁷ John Sumida, "Alfred Thayer Mahan, Geopolitician," *Geopolitics: Geography and Strategy* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 39.

¹¹⁸ Nicholas J. Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2008), 96, 101-103.

Chapter 3

Economy of Proximity: Reexamining the Byzantine Role of Western Europe's Economic Development

Introduction

The French historian and co-founder of the Annales School, Fernand Braudel, succinctly argued that the era of the Crusades saw a turn of the course of civilization. Before the Crusades, the Eastern Roman Empire and a vast realm of the Islamic East dominated trade and culture in the Mediterranean Basin. The Crusades opened an opportunity for the West to undergo a transformation from downtrodden, savage powers, to become the new rulers of the Mediterranean Sea. Before then, Braudel posited, culture was a product of Eastern-filtered dissemination, with a bias toward interaction with the Islamic world.

This dramatic — indeed opposing — shift in hegemony was based largely on trade and wealth. A specific and sudden irruption during the Crusades was what allowed Europe to turn itself from the horrors of the so-called Dark Ages. From there, a collection of outward-looking European cultures (Portuguese, Catalan, mercantilist traders in search of spice and specie — gold and silver) set in motion the Renaissance. Then a seemingly inevitable path of European global dominance during the Enlightenment would ensue.¹¹⁹ This classic theory that

¹¹⁹ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (reprint edition, New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 563-566.

pervades academic thought in the West endures in conventional historical narratives and current scholarship.

Of course, this revolutionary moment in European history, according to the classical narrative, was not purely a factor of imperial trade. Rather, the Crusades themselves, and their center around spiritual equality, offering a chance for sainthood and nobility alike, and the sobering reminder of red blood spilt upon the red cross on the white tabard, began a social change in Europe. The distinguished French economic historian and public intellectual Georges Duby argued this experience was shared across the social estates of Europe and changed the view of hierarchy. Suddenly, there was in the European psyche an idea of nobility, even if brought upon by death. Such a paradigm shift stimulated the idea of economic change itself.¹²⁰ Social mobility doubtlessly spurred the idea that trade could be more widespread. Western Europe could become a massive trading region once again by virtue that the peasant was now able to leave on an adventure from the farmlands without social upheaval, especially if that quest took place in the Holy Land. The Holy Land, after all, was the center of geographical and spiritual thought for every member of every estate.

Massive capital was required to undertake such an extraordinary series of campaigns that brought upon these social and economic paradigm shifts. Even in classical economic history and geography, scholars such as L.L. Da Ponte

¹²⁰ Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980), 198-202.

posited the wealth necessary for the complicated undertaking of fighting in the Levant was, ironically, built from the riches of the Levant. Specifically, Italian trade in the Levant afforded a buildup of capital in the Italian trading city-states. Among these, Venice, Genoa, Pisa, and Amalfi are prominent in the era immediately prior to the Crusades. This trade was beneficial for the city-states; it exposed them to the seemingly infinite wealth of the trading-rich East, which already had exposure to commodities and wares from as far as China and India.¹²¹ This diffusion of goods between the Italian city-states and the Far East was not unknown at all to the latter. Although on the fringes to the Far East, trade in these cities was ultimately profitable, and necessarily perpetuated itself — West and East actively sought out their opposites' goods.¹²² In fact, a cultural geographic trait of Islamic powers during this (and prior) period emphasized the development of trade economy.¹²³ Naturally, the cultural and urban importance of the Mediterranean would stimulate trade interests in Islam and the Italian city-states. The Italians sought out trade with the Orient at least in part because of active Moslem traders in their developing ports. The Islamic polities of this era, in fact, emphasized expansion along these trade routes not only to benefit the economy, but to sometimes include imperial conquest.¹²⁴

¹²¹ L.L. Da Ponte, "Origin and Influence of the Commercial Prosperity of the Italian Republics," *The Knickerbocker; or New York Monthly Magazine*, 1, 6. (New York: American Periodicals, 1833), 359-362.

¹²² Stewart Gordon, *When Asia was the World: Traveling Merchants, Scholars, Warriors, and Monks who Created the 'Riches of the East'* (Philadelphia: De Capo Press, 2008), 189.

¹²³ Xavier de Planhol, *The World of Islam* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959), 67-68.

¹²⁴ De Planhol (1959) 118-119.



Figure 3.1: The Italian trading republics.¹²⁵ Image depicts the major maritime trade powers and their respective coats of arms.

¹²⁵ Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. See: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/44/Le_Repubbliche_Marinare.jpg



Figure 3.2: The Abbasid Caliphate at its height.¹²⁶ The approximate location of the Levant is outlined in blue.

Economic relationships grew between the Italian city-states and their Northern counterparts through special agreements on land and governance in the complicated weave of geopolitics in Western Europe during this era. Trading city-states within Italy held a special status with the Papacy, the German Emperor, or both (often there was a testy relationship between those two). Susan Reynolds outlines these agreements between city-states like Genoa and its feudal neighbors that allowed trade to thrive between the two distinct political

¹²⁶ Modified. Base image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. See: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e1/Abbasids850.png>

structures in Europe.¹²⁷ Ultimately, as the Italian republics thrived, their feudal neighbors benefited, edging even the agriculturally focused Western Europe outside of Italy toward a new era of prosperity. The landscape in the vast fields of Western Europe changed radically, much as Braudel argued the seagoing relationship had, thanks to an eruption of prosperity brought upon by the Crusades' cultural and economic interchange. Recognition of these important economies echoes Braudel's argument; the light of Antiquity as fed by interaction with the Arab world would have faded, absent an active interchange and commerce between the Levant and trading city-states. Europe's economic renewal would have gone unrealized.

What a straight-up mercantile and trade-governed thesis lacks, even with refinements from recent scholars, is a distinctly geographical element of maritime sensibility. The Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire had, throughout this era served as a significant, state-directed trading power in the Mediterranean Basin, dominating within and beyond its own borders.¹²⁸ In addition to the cultural links with the Italian peninsula, the Byzantine imperial heartland's location at the apogee of three continents (surrounded on all sides by water) helps to establish itself as a natural trading hub. Since onset, the Byzantine Empire was a relatively urbanized, trading power. Throughout its history, despite lulls in the overall stable

¹²⁷ Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 70-71, 192-194, 239-240.

¹²⁸ Angeliki Laiou and Cécile Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 49-51.

condition of the state, it remained a collection of active and far-reaching entrepôts.¹²⁹ The Italian city-states held a cultural, commercial, and political link with the Byzantine Empire. As Europe clawed its way out of the Dark Ages, building capital, surplus, and savings that resulted in the explosion of the Crusades, the Byzantine Empire could not simply be a bystander observing this process. On the contrary, the Byzantine Empire played a far more significant role in leading Europe out of the Dark Ages than is traditionally accorded it. While Braudel's Levantine-centric argument should not be overturned, it must incorporate a geoeconomic element, which then points to a far more significant Byzantine role than initially thought.

Thesis

Simply, it was this relationship between the Italian republics and the Byzantine Empire which was quite possibly the most crucial factor in the urban redevelopment of Europe, in the vein of the Pirenne Thesis. So profoundly influential and potent was the Byzantine maritime trade economy, that it helped reshape and redirect Europe's course far more than any one single event like the Crusades could, given the duration of imperial influence in the region. This trade policy, imperial in nature in the sense it was imposed and controlled centrally, also profoundly impacted the geoeconomic and geopolitical character of the

¹²⁹ Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 5-10.

Byzantine Empire itself. Even if undesirable, given economic and environmental factors, trade with the urbanized Byzantine Empire was necessary and largely advantageous to outside powers.

Necessitation of Trade

In trading with the Orient, the Italian republics — as is the case for all trading powers of the day — were limited by their technological capabilities. Although information is limited on naval architecture in the Middle Ages before the Eleventh Century, the late Middle Ages saw a profound change in shipbuilding technology and in the ability to fund fleets and secure commercial navies. The Byzantine and Islamic worlds were similar in naval architecture, and they represented the cutting edge of naval technology in terms of trade capabilities. The Italian republics' vessels were, by the same measure, considered inferior by the seafarers of these realms. Even assuming trade was directed to the Italian city-states from the Islamic world, physical limitation of the vessels needs to be incorporated into any analysis of sea- and ocean-going capabilities. These ships were confined to the coastline and could not sail feasibly straight through into the Mediterranean heartland.¹³⁰

Even when using manpower by oar, technology and sail manipulation of

¹³⁰ Even assuming fair waters, there is no direct current from the Levant to the Italian peninsula, nor do prevailing winds permit direct interaction through the Mediterranean to the Levant from Italy. Rather, a ship, given contemporary technology, would have, at some point, had to be in proximity to Byzantine lands in order to trade with the Arabic world. See: John Pryor, *Geography, Technology, and War: Studies in the Maritime History of the Mediterranean, 649-1571* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 12.

the most capable vessels was required to adhere to environmental patterns of trade. It is simply not conceivable that a vibrant trade directly between the Levant and the Italian peninsula could have taken place without some interaction with Byzantine lands.¹³¹ Logically, port calls to the most vibrant city in the world at the time, or at the very least to Crete and the Dodecanese,¹³² would have no doubt been favorable to sailors and beneficial to traders. This argument should not be seen as an outright contradiction to the longstanding idea of European development through Levantine trade. Rather, as Chris Wickham argues, Italian ports throughout Italy were largely engaged with the Byzantine Empire in addition to the Levant.¹³³ Trading with the closer Byzantine Empire would have mitigated logistical costs and risks significantly, as opposed to trade with the further out Levant. Indeed, trading where networks had already been well-established by longstanding imperial routes would be advantageous for the merchants at home and at sea.

The Italian city-states' cultural precedent for a legalized society with a political infrastructure conducive to trade is indisputably linked to their Antiquity history in the Roman Empire. Despite the sizeable setback of Western Rome's fall, a new set of medieval cities rose under the administration of the reconquering Eastern Empire during the reign of Justinian I.

¹³¹ Pryor, 25-34. Sailing against prevailing winds, even with the maneuvers granted by the advent of the lateen, still doubled the length of time a voyage may take. See: Pryor, 53.

¹³² Which were both regions where prevailing winds and trade permitting currents were abundant.

¹³³ Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: Illuminating the Dark Ages, 400-1000* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 369

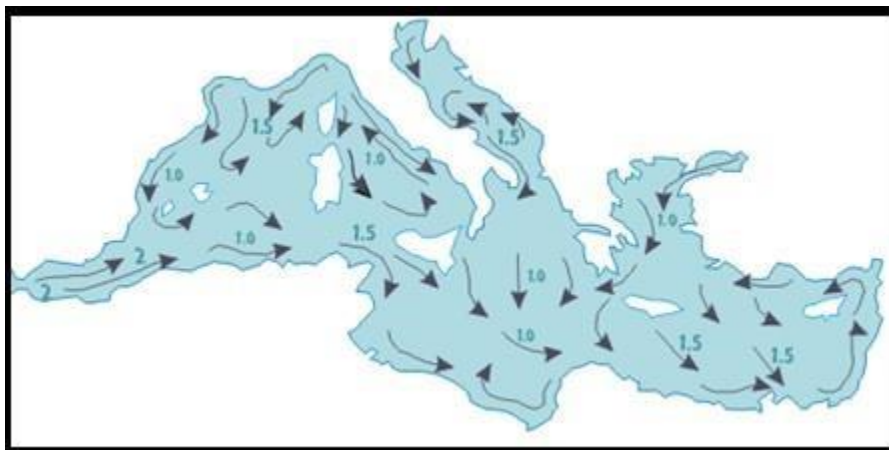


Figure 3.3: Map of Mediterranean Currents in June.¹³⁴

Although there were still cultural distinctions between Byzantine East and Latin West, the centralized, revived administration in these city-states were conducive to restoring a trade-centered culture. The aforementioned centralized trade economy of the Eastern Empire left an impact on the landscape and administration of the gradually reviving West.¹³⁵ Maintaining these linkages culturally and economically would be of benefit to the rising Italian city-states, if for no other reason than to emulate and prosper from the “maritime character” of the Byzantine Empire that “lowered costs and fostered trade.”¹³⁶ These city-states would not be isolated from traders from the Levant, even after the Byzantine government lost their hold on these territories. However, given their political linkages to Constantinople, incoming as well as outgoing trade must have had a direct linkage to imperial territory proper. For the period when the

¹³⁴ Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. See:

<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ef/MEDCURR.GIF>

¹³⁵ John Julius Norwich, *Byzantium: The Early Years* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, Inc., 1988), 212226.

¹³⁶ Laiou and Morriison, 13.

Byzantine emperor had direct dominion over Italy, trade with those outside of the Empire was legally required to go through Constantinople.¹³⁷ Through this tightly controlled economy, the stage would be set for an intimate economic relationship between medieval Italy and the Byzantine Empire, even after Byzantine control vanished from the Italian city-states.

Legally, tight trade controls in a period with slow travel and communication were difficult to enforce. However, many an industry kept under the watchful eye of the Imperium was centered not only in trade in the environs of the capital, but in actual production, with figures transmitted, monitored, and acted upon.

Perhaps the most apparent commodity adhering to this principle is silk. As Edward H. Schafer, the Classicist Berkeley historian of T'ang China, writes at the beginning of *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand*, "The charm of exotic goods is potent in our own times."¹³⁸ The draw of high-value-added commodities, especially those that could be moved from place to place without incurring huge tariffs for freight or transit, was vast. (After all, as the French historical geographer Xavier de Planhol notes, during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, ice delivered from mountain ice warehouses was an almost impossibly precious commodity in North Africa.¹³⁹) During the landmark reign of Justinian I,

¹³⁷ Laiou and Morriison, 33-36. Trade of critical resources with those outside with empire, such as textiles, foodstuffs, currency, precious metals, and other commodities worthy of imperial attention, were kept under close watch for the purpose of taxation and allocation.

¹³⁸ Edward Schaffer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1943), 1.

¹³⁹ Xavier de Planhol, "A Story of Snow: Towards an Historical Geography of Chilled Beverages" *Journal of Historical Geography* 20 (2) (1994), 117-123.

the Byzantine Empire disrupted the significance of monopoly and exclusive trade route along the Silk Road by smuggling silkworms from China — rather as England would much later purloin sires from the merino sheep flocks of Spain, upsetting in the act a five hundred year monopoly on fine-wool maintained by the Honorable Council of the Mesta.¹⁴⁰ While the material and quality of silk was different than that provided from Far Eastern trade, acquisition had a direct impact on the economy of the Levant, which later fell under Islamic dominion.¹⁴¹

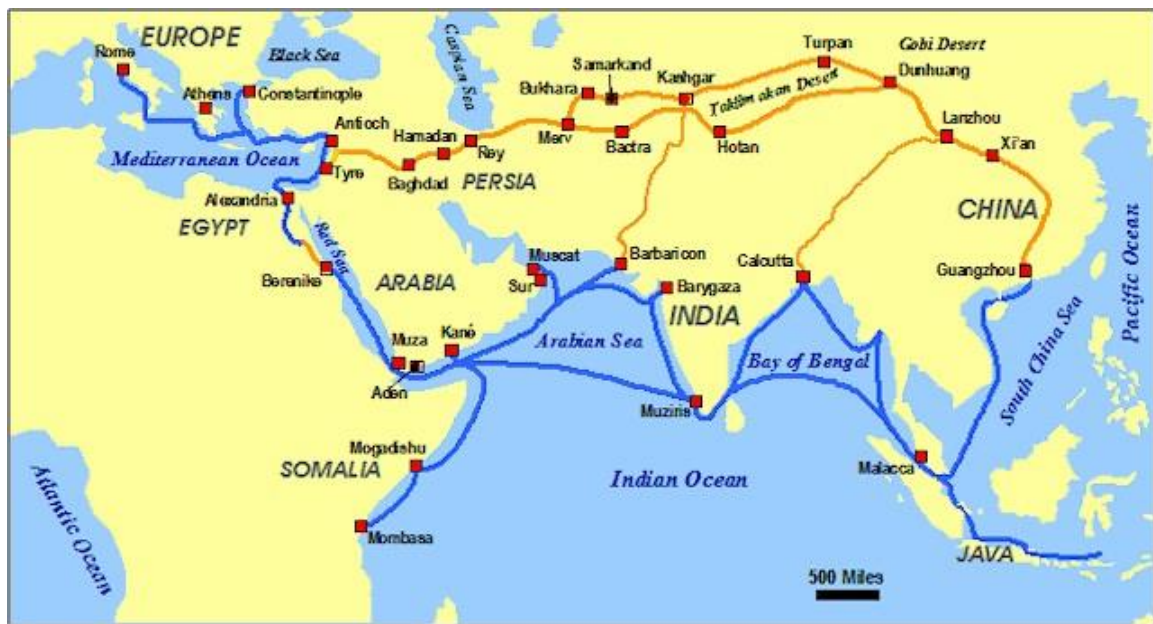


Figure 3.4: Ancient trade routes in the Eastern Hemisphere.¹⁴²

Trading with the Byzantines for a luxury material would have almost been

¹⁴⁰ Julius Klein, *The Mesta: A Study in Spanish Economic History, 1273–1836* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920).

¹⁴¹ David Jacoby, "Silk in Western Byzantium Before the Fourth Crusade," *Byzantine Zeitschrift*, 84-85, no. 2 (2009): 452-500.

¹⁴² GlobalSecurity.org. "Silk Road in Classic Antiquity."

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/silk-road-classical.htm>.

compulsory, considering the multiplying cost of silk as it traveled from its Chinese origin point. Italian states engaged directly and profoundly with the Byzantine Empire for trade, rather than the Levant. In fact, silk workers themselves were a commodity to the Norman Kingdom of Sicily: Roger II's sacking of Achaia resulted in the displacement of textile workers to his capital at Palermo, so he would not have to engage in punitive Byzantine commerce for the material. So too did the Venetians routinely engage in silk trade, so much so that it caused an appeal to the imperial administration in the Twelfth Century to be granted generous trading privileges.¹⁴³ Silk's nearly mystically alluring trade during this era is direct evidence of well-known Italian and Byzantine commercial interaction, which, despite its value, somehow has not made its way into mainstream scholarly discourse on Western Europe's economic and trade development.

Results of Trade

Considerable recent scholarship expounds on the cultural relationship between medieval Italy and the Byzantine Empire. Colin Wells illustrates the geographical, political, and cultural impact that the Western Empire, and Byzantine rule, had on Italy. Wells argues for a real shift in the urban landscape, critical formation in Church policy, and economic innovation.

He further hints at an economic argument by invoking the cultural proximity of Italy to the Byzantine Empire, though he focuses more on the era of

¹⁴³ Laiou and Morrisson, 127-130.

direct rule.¹⁴⁴ He does not substantially deviate from Braudel; Italy indeed had an impact on forming Europe. Wells, like other scholars, argues for a profound increase in Byzantium's involvement with Europe after the Crusades. Once again, this landmark event created a cultural shift not only for the West, but for the Byzantines as well. Wells's thesis, captured by his title, when put to geographic and economic perspectives, is far more profound than he realized.

However, this cultural relationship between Italy and the Byzantine Empire underwent shifts. Geographical distance, relations with the Papacy,^{145 146} and the influx of invaders into Italy turned Italian trading cities into independent, republican city-states. They shifted away from centrally-controlled Byzantine trade policy and toward commercial rivalry and trade with Western Europe. Byzantine rule was split between the increasingly autonomous republics, the invading Lombards, and those cities that remained under Byzantine control.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Colin Wells, *Sailing from Byzantium: How a Lost Empire Shaped the World* (New York: Delta Books, 2006), 9-12.

¹⁴⁵ The geopolitical rivalry between the Pope in Rome and the Emperor in Constantinople was of great importance in separating Byzantine rule from Italy. The lines between spiritual and temporal of both of these offices often blurred, and Rome with both its imperial and spiritual glory were constantly at stake in these disputes. For a more complete treatment, see Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantine East and Latin West: Two Worlds of Christendom in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), especially 73-80.

¹⁴⁶ The dispute between the Papacy and the Imperial office was more than philosophical or Machiavellian. Paul Collins argues one of the material reasons the growing rift between Papacy and Imperial office was directly related to the Roman loss of North Africa, which traditionally fed the old imperial capital. The Papacy, then, had to rely on Southern Italy. Therefore, when the Byzantine Emperor and Pope had a disagreement, the power of food remained in the Emperor's hands. This domineering relationship no doubt prompted the Papacy, in addition to the aforementioned reasons, to increase its geopolitical influence throughout Italy and disrupt future influence wherever possible. See: Collins, 45.

¹⁴⁷ These cities were concentrated along the Adriatic, and in southern Italy and Sicily.



Figure 3.5: Italy in the Eleventh Century.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. See: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/e/e9/Italy_1000_AD.svg/565px-Italy_1000_AD.svg.png

The impact of this territorial chaos took its economic toll, unquestionably.¹⁴⁹ However, the infrastructure of Italy built since the days of the Roman Republic remained, and was reorganized for this new European economy. Beyond those limits, Byzantine trade and a prepotent fleet persisted in making inroads throughout Italian shores and territory, despite loss of control to Papal rivalry, autonomy, and invaders.¹⁵⁰ Yet, Byzantine cities were ahead of their time in terms of traditional economic development. Major urban centers across the empire served as trade hubs for more than just luxury goods — even agricultural goods, freighted from afar, had a role in the Byzantine urban trade economy.¹⁵¹ These Italian cities would benefit from this level of development in trading with one another. In addition, they would benefit from trade with the established economic centers of the Empire within practical proximity across the Mediterranean. The traders would be used to dealing in these centers. Even inhabitants of less prosperous Italian cities, which could not engage in luxury trade, could still engage in capital buildup and develop a trade economy through basic commodity trade. This development would be beneficial in changing the Italian geoeconomic landscape, funding further-reaching trade, and eventually leading to the crucial Italian role leading to and throughout the Crusades.

A clarifying example of an impact of Byzantium throughout the whole of Western Europe is found in the marriage of German Emperor Otto to the

¹⁴⁹ Wickham, 143-149.

¹⁵⁰ Wickham, 260.

¹⁵¹ Laiou and Morrisson, 115.

Byzantine Empress Theophano. Such marriages were, of course, strategic, and the consecration of such a marriage certainly embodied a growing relationship between East and West, beyond the middle ground of the Italian peninsula.¹⁵² This increase in diplomatic and economic ties was contrasted with a decrease in spiritual ties, which met its legal climax in AD 1054 with the Great Schism. This act alone did not fracture cultural relations, nor did it create outright hostility between East and West: that distinction belonged to the devastation that occurred as a result of the Fourth Crusade (1202–1204).¹⁵³ Aside from dispelling the notion that Europe was shrinking from an economic pursuit of influence and lucre, this move proved advantageous geopolitically to Byzantine influence in Italy.¹⁵⁴ With control gained of the Messapia Peninsula in Italy and of Epirus on the Balkan Peninsula, access from the Adriatic to the Ionian Sea was under Byzantine supervision and naval control. Italian states on the Adriatic, to include the Papal States, Ferrara, and Venice, had no choice but to deal with the Byzantine Empire should they wish to trade with the Levant.

From a geographical-economic perspective, Venice, of all the major trading powers in Italy, was best poised to trade with the strongholds of the

¹⁵² John Julius Norwich, *A Short History of Byzantium* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 213.

¹⁵³ Geanakoplos, 1-3. Dr. Geanakoplos argues that even amid the political complexities of the Middle Ages, the Great Schism only had a profoundly diplomatic impact on the Papacy. To the common merchant or urban dweller who would even receive a host of Latin armies en route to a Crusade, the division between Catholicism and Orthodoxy remained, for the most part, unknown.

¹⁵⁴ Collins, 279. Notably, Dr. Collins points out that Byzantine influence expansion was not confined to southern Italy. There was a revolt in Rome, likely under the direction of the Byzantine Empire, to disrupt German influence and disempower the Papacy. One of the tragic results was the strangulation of Pope Benedict. The ensuing politics saw a further increase in Byzantine influence in Italy with the Papacy caught between two empires kept at peace by marriage.

Byzantine Empire along the east coast of the Adriatic and Ionian seas. In addition, the Venetian Doge and merchants could trade with areas under Byzantine influence in southern Italy. Culturally, Venice was, from its foundation, legally subject to the Byzantine emperor, though with a significant degree of autonomy conducive to trade endeavors still sustained legally under Byzantine trade laws. The geographical proximity of Venice to the Byzantine-Italian capital¹⁵⁵ certainly had an impact on its political and cultural character, to say nothing of the convenience of trade within the Empire. Venice's rise as an independent maritime and economic power coincides with the decrease of influence of the Byzantine Empire in the Adriatic, which, like Venice's rise, was not always a steady slope.¹⁵⁶

Geopolitically, Venice was in a precarious and strategically troublesome position. Wedged between contending Byzantine and Germanic superpowers, Venice managed to promote trade between them and prevent direct intervention from either. The Most Serene Republic, legally always a part of the Byzantine Empire, did not hesitate to participate in common defense when it seemed convenient to Venetian purposes. Additionally, before the Second Millennium, Venice was legally forbidden from engaging in trade with Moslem powers by the Byzantine Empire for strategic resources — namely to constrain access to timber

¹⁵⁵ During the era of the Exarchate of Ravenna, which was established shortly after Justinian I's reconquests. See: Norwich (1988), 273.

¹⁵⁶ Frederic C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 23–24.

and weapons. For these products, Venice would have to look to neighbors and to Constantinople.¹⁵⁷ Venice always seemed to keep a very chilly, *realpolitik* view of the regional geostrategy. Venice worked to keep the Byzantines at bay, prevent Norman hegemony, halt Arab raiding and piracy, and subdue German invasions all at once, as it began to rise to new heights in the Eleventh Century.¹⁵⁸ Holding true to the arguments of Fernand Braudel, the complicated webs Venice wove helped the city-state to develop and increased its trade with colonies, while stimulating European growth as Venice transformed from an Adriatic Sea power to a regional European force.

In keeping with the Braudelian narrative, Venice saw an extraordinary shift in power at the pivotal moment just prior to the Crusades. Venetian governors recalled legal ties to the Byzantine Empire and rallied to the defense of the Empire after the Norman seizure of Southern Italy in 1082. Perhaps this decision came from a Venetian commercial mindset; the Normans no doubt disrupted their maritime economy — maintained by access via a long sea-route — by capturing the trading cities of Amalfi and Salerno. Venetians heeded the call and waged a war at sea that effectively secured trade routes in and around then present and former Byzantine territory. Their campaigns won no colonies, but did renew trade with the Eastern Empire.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Steven Runciman, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus and His Reign: A Study of Tenth Century Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), 222.

¹⁵⁸ Lane, 26.

¹⁵⁹ Lane, 27.

The joint Venetian-Byzantine campaigns against the Normans are described in detail by Anna Komnene. In the *Alexiad*, she describes a campaign that extended into Byzantine Italy. With the assistance of a Venetian naval intervention, the result was a Byzantine victory acquiring a suzerain Balkan Peninsula. The Venetian fleet returned to their capital with an impressive trove of spoils and gifts from Byzantine territories, doubtlessly of benefit to the Venetian economy upon their return to the Most Serene Republic.¹⁶⁰ The Norman campaign's triumphal spoils, however, were not the greatest capital benefit to the Venetians. In gratitude for their efforts, the Emperor Alexios in 1082 AD awarded Venice the right to trade freely across the Empire. Constantinopolitan tariffs were lifted from Venetian merchants. In addition, although they were confined to specific quarters in major cities where they could transact business, the Venetians had a right to free travel under their auspices of being Roman citizens. Similar agreements between Venice and the Empire had been in place since the end of the Tenth Century at least, though none so far reaching as the one Alexios granted, in terms of economic and historical consequences. These trading posts flourished especially in the imperial capital and the provincial capital of Dyrrachion.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Anna Komnene, translated by E.R.A. Sewter, *The Alexiad* (London: Penguin, 2009), 111-113.

¹⁶¹ Which is conveniently located straddling the Adriatic and Ionian Seas.



Figure 3.6: Norman-controlled Southern Italy and Sicily.¹⁶² The Normans Rule the Northern half of Sicily as well as Apulia and Calabria. Major battles against the Byzantines are depicted with crossed sabers.

¹⁶² Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. See: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/7b/Italy_and_Illyria_1084_v2.svg

Of such great benefit was renewed free trade that by the Twelfth Century, the Byzantine administration lifted all taxes between Venetian and Byzantine citizens within Byzantine territory.¹⁶³ Clearly, the relationship between Venice and the Byzantine Empire evolved over this crucial period that stands at the center of Braudel's argument of European economic development. In this emerging culture of free trade between these powers the amount of capital Venice inevitably built was substantial — which certainly was not the case in trade with the rival powers of the Levant.¹⁶⁴ The Venetian trade network between the Byzantine Empire and Western Europe as a direct result of these events was, arguably, among the most important in outfitting Europe with the maritime power and economic interest needed for the ensuing Crusades. Of course, the Crusades in profound ways changed the course of European geopolitical relationships, within the continent and far afield.

The Crusades should not simply be viewed as a single event at the cusp of the Twelfth Century that raised Europe into the role of a trade power. Rather, the Crusades are an entire era, from an economic and geographical perspective. Although Venice never developed into an empire, in the sense of annexing vast swaths of territory, the Fourth Crusade vouchsafed the Republic a tremendous

¹⁶³ Laiou and Morriison, 144.

¹⁶⁴ As Lane describes it, the Venetians became the outlet to the Levant while being politically and economically linked intrinsically with the Byzantine Empire. He argues the Byzantine Empire benefited Venice as a medium to Germanic Europe for trade purposes. Notably, he argues that the active Venetian role of trading outside to the East through these Byzantine links occurs at the beginning of the Second Millennium, which coincides well in terms of timing, according to conventional scholarship, of Europe emerging from the Dark Ages. See: Lane, 5.

trade opportunity. When the core of the Byzantine Empire was divided among the victors of the Fourth Crusade, Venice's contribution and political alignment allowed Venice the opportunity to rule nearly half of the newly divided Empire.¹⁶⁵

Venice could maintain a trade in Constantinople, while at the same time enhancing trading posts throughout the newly carved Byzantine Empire, free from any restrictions. Rather than seeking major cities like Thessalonika or Adrianople, interestingly, Venice chose to establish rule over the Ionian Islands, the edge of the Morean Coast, Crete, and the Achaean Islands. These posts would allow Venice sea supremacy to trade with Constantinople. Coupled with posts along the Adriatic, in fact, Venice took nearly total control of currents from the capital to Constantinople and the Levant.¹⁶⁶ In fact, only during the Fourth Crusade would Venice acquire an ability to trade with the Moslem Levant free from Byzantine influence and mediation.

Yet, this era does not align smoothly with the timing of Braudel's argument. By the Thirteenth Century, Europe was already well on its way to a new period of urban and economic development. Even when Byzantine rule was reestablished from the "Latin" interruption after the Fourth Crusade, Venetian trade influence, although diminished by foreign competition, did not disappear from the Byzantine Empire. Venetian holdings along the southern maritime trade routes to the Levant, in fact, allowed Venice to commercially exploit much of the

¹⁶⁵ Lane, 42.

¹⁶⁶ Lane, 38-39.

Empire. Venice became known as much for access to exotic Levantine goods in Europe as it was for wares from Byzantine lands.¹⁶⁷ So did Venice become a prime illustration of the necessary addition of the Byzantine economic narrative to longstanding scholarship of Western medieval development. Indeed, Venetian trade with the Byzantine Empire played at least as significant of a role in European economic development as Venetian trade with the Levant.

Venice, despite the previous political and trade infrastructures in place, was not the only Italian thalassocracy actively engaging the Byzantine Empire. Discourse on Byzantine-Venetian relations, with particular attention to the Crusade era, must include the cooperation, competition, and general involvement of Genoa. Unlike Venice, Genoa's trade development was more closely tied with Western Europe in Genoa's early beginnings. Currents and prevailing winds tied Venice more closely with the Catalan coasts, Occitan and Lombard fiefs, the Norman-Italians, and North Africa than it did the Byzantine Empire.¹⁶⁸

In addition, the Genoese lacked a regulated, in-place infrastructure comparable to the Byzantine-Venetian trade system. Yet, this did not exclude the Genoese from trade with the Byzantines by any stretch of the imagination. Besides holding a number of contracts with the Byzantine Empire, the Genoese still were restricted by the same currents and winds as the Venetians. Once their vessels crossed the Straits of Messina toward the Ionian Sea in order to trade

¹⁶⁷ Lane, 78-79.

¹⁶⁸ Steven A. Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese, 958-1528* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 49-50.

with the Levant and Egypt (with whom they held a great deal of contracts),¹⁶⁹ they too would have to work along the Achaean Sea and Crete. Although Genoa's history does not parallel Venice's with early Byzantine trade, it nevertheless remains one of the crucial cities at the center of Braudel's developmental argument.

Genoese trade with the Byzantine Empire multiplied well beyond anything in Genoa's earlier history as a direct result of the Crusade interactions that broadcast such epic change throughout Europe. Agreements in place with Venetian and the Byzantine governments prompted a certain amount of envy from the Genoese. Prosperity experienced by the Venetians during the Crusades without a doubt bolstered the interest of Genoese merchant leaders in trade with Byzantium. As a result, when Genoa began to flourish in its trade prowess by the middle of the Twelfth Century, Genoa, like Venice, found itself caught between empires of East and West.

In the same balancing act of diplomacy and timing, Genoa decisively intervened in a second wave of Norman-Byzantine Wars, and as a result won themselves the same free trade and tax-reduced benefits the Venetians had years earlier. This deal was directly comparable to the one struck between the Byzantines and Pisa. What ensued was a more direct access of Byzantine trade to the half of Western Europe much further from Venice.¹⁷⁰ Genoa now had

¹⁶⁹ Epstein, 58-59.

¹⁷⁰ Epstein, 70-74.

direct, financially justified incentive to move further into the Byzantine Empire both economically and politically. The opportunities given by the Emperor Manuel Komnenos to the Genoese allowed them the same incentivized trade sectors as the Venetians in key cities throughout the Empire, to include Constantinople. It was this physical presence, increase in ties, and economic “shrinking” of the Genoese half of Europe that led to geopolitical involvement by Genoa in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade. Indeed, Genoese involvement was comparable to Venice’s role in terms of economic consequences.

The consequences of the Fourth Crusade reached beyond new access of outside states to Byzantine goods, a change of administration, and an overall devastation of the Byzantine Empire (from which it would ultimately never recover). A competitive conflict erupted between Venice and Genoa as a direct result of access to these goods across the Achaean, of which Venice held a nearmonopoly on trade. For the sake of maintaining stability throughout the new ‘Latin’ Empire and across Western Christendom, the Papacy pushed for peace between the two warring trade states. The concession offered by Venetians was, in fact, a return to the status quo of tax and tariff-reduction incentives in the formerly Byzantine territories that the Genoese had enjoyed prior to the Fourth Crusade.

Under this agreement, Genoese diplomatic, political, and economic involvement in the Latin Empire, and the eventually restored Byzantine Empire, benefited. Indeed, the reestablishment and refinement of trade had a direct effect

in prompting the Genoese to reach out toward the Levant across Mediterranean currents, where European trade was consistently building.

An illustration of these trade posts growing is apparent with an even more generous trading deal being struck between the Kingdom of Cyprus and the Republic of Genoa. In this agreement, Genoese commerce was exempt from taxes, and dedicated trading outposts were set up in major Cypriot cities.¹⁷¹ Through the Byzantine Empire and the Kingdom of Cyprus, Europe's access to economically stimulating Levantine trade grew through Genoese trade.

Genoa, moreover, played a unique role in the Fourth Crusade's shrinking of Europe beyond the Mediterranean. After the Fourth Crusade, Genoese trade presence in Caffa¹⁷² built to direct political control. This formerly Byzantine land at the northern end of the Black Sea, straddling the Sea of Azov, afforded the opportunity of European trade with the North along the Black Sea, as well as up the Don and Kuban Rivers. Previously, this trade was almost exclusively enjoyed by the Byzantine Empire's merchants.

Genoese commercial and political presence in Constantinople, built through the Eleventh and Thirteenth Centuries, afforded Genoa the ability to effectively administer trade and rule in the far-out Black Sea colony. From Caffa, trading colonies naturally grew throughout the Black Sea, giving Europe access

¹⁷¹ Epstein, 110-112.

¹⁷² A strong Byzantine trade infrastructure was in place in the Cherson peninsula. Constantine VII, in particular, gives explicit instructions on how to handle Chersonite trade in the event of loss of Byzantine order. The Genoese no doubt benefited from this strong, centralized, trade-centered development. See: Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, translated by R.J.H. Jenkins, *De Administrando Imperio* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) 285-287.

to goods beyond the Levant. However, the presence of trade outposts was possible only through tolerance and cooperation with at first the 'Latin' Empire, but later a Byzantine Empire under Palaiologos administration, which tolerated a Genoese commercial presence.¹⁷³

Although less renowned and less culturally tied to the Byzantine Empire than its Venetian counterpart, the Republic of Genoa played a significant role in Braudel's argument of shrinking Europe geoeconomically and building trade capital. The Republic of Genoa, like Venice, clearly had to deal with the Byzantine Empire diplomatically and commercially, however, to accomplish these extraordinary feats of expanding trade.

¹⁷³ Epstein, 142-143.

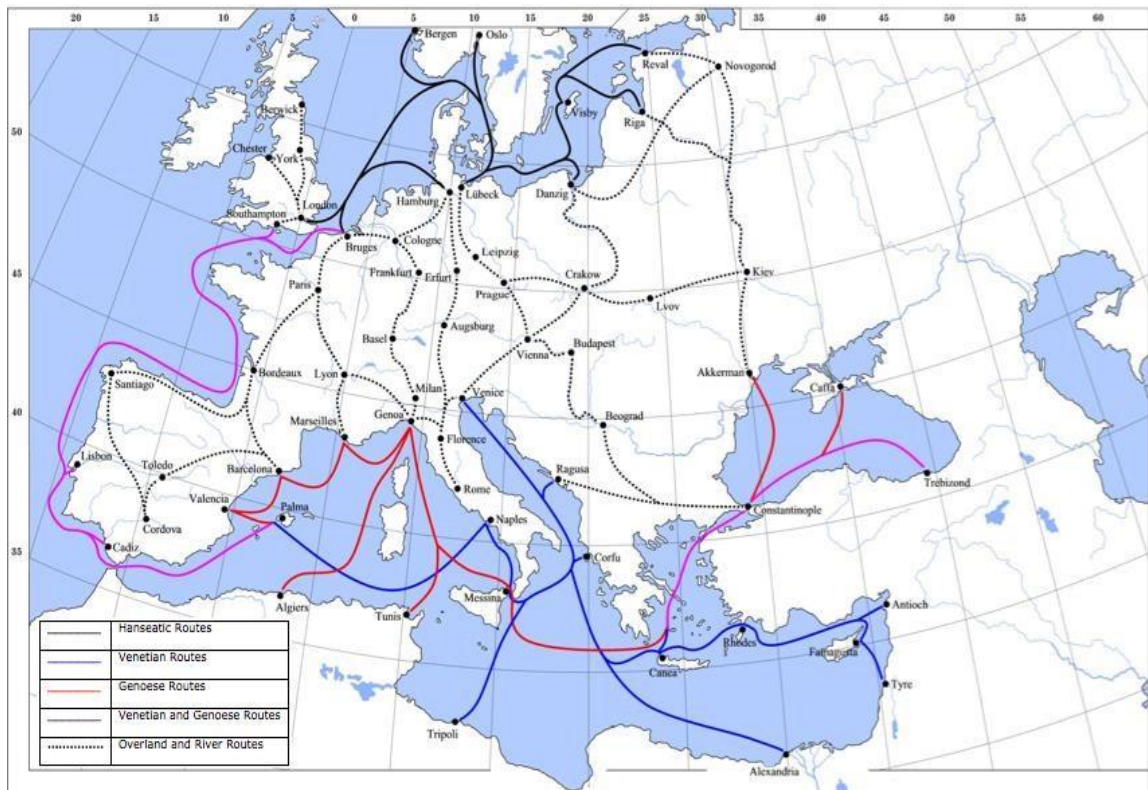


Figure 3.7: Late Medieval Trade Routes.¹⁷⁴

Just as certainly as trade was not directed solely from Europe, so too did the simulating trade parties of the East, with which Europe traded, have an incentive to continue these activities unhampered. On the one hand, as the Byzantine Empire shrank geopolitically and began its slow decline to 1453, it relied on the Italian traders more and more to stimulate local markets. It turned from an importer to an exporter of luxury wares and essential commodities.¹⁷⁵ On the other hand, even during the rise of Italian trade, before the direct stimulus of the Crusades and the economic contraction of Europe, the Byzantine

¹⁷⁴ Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. See: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e1/Late_Medieval_Trade_Routes.jpg

¹⁷⁵ Laiou and Morriison, 186.

administration never relied solely on foreign interest in Constantinopolitan trade. Byzantine rulers actively took diplomatic and political steps to keep itself a viable regional power. In a famous example prior to the Crusades, when the Norman-Byzantine Wars begin to involve other parties across the Mediterranean, Bohemund reached out to fellow Catholic powers. He began a slander campaign against Alexios I, accusing him and his people of heresy and fueling the zeal of a potential holy war. Alexios specifically responded with personal letters to the maritime trading powers of Pisa, Genoa, and Venice. He did so not only to ensure the security of his own naval operations, but also to ensure the security of his Empire's economy.¹⁷⁶ This pre-Crusades era of the Byzantine Empire taking active measures to preserve trade normalcy synchronizes with the argument of European capital growth out of the Dark Ages.

Of course, the far-reaching trade of each of these cities had consequences at a local level. This local trade eventually diffused into continental trade, as Braudel argued. From Genoa and Pisa, trade was stimulated with Florence, Milan, Provence, and the Catalonian coast, which in turn disseminated northward over time, easing into the northern Mediterranean and the interior of central Europe. Likewise, through Venetian contact, the Illyrian coast and major cities like Zagreb benefited, with direct Venetian routes going as far inland as Buda in the Kingdom of Hungary.¹⁷⁷ It is through this web, which is in no way

¹⁷⁶ Komnene, 332-333.

¹⁷⁷ Gene Brucker, *Renaissance Florence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 69-72.

departing from the current scholarship, the Byzantine Empire was able to affect so many different European powers economically. This should come as fairly unremarkable, as it was this process that allowed for the spread of Levantine trade's stimulus throughout Europe. This Byzantine addendum only suggests European development theory should incorporate a basic geographical understanding to the trade that shrank Europe and the Mediterranean.

Conclusion

The shift of the Mediterranean from a unipolar economic system geopolitically dominated by the Roman Empire to a new system was not simply a transfer of one power to another. Braudel's argument, as reinforced by scholars to this day of the 'Roman Lake' becoming an 'Islamic Lake' ignores the truly multipolar system evident in the early medieval world.¹⁷⁸ Rather, as Brian Graham proposes, the Islamic regional economy of the Mediterranean, from its inception, already had to share and compete with the Roman trade networks carried on by the Byzantine Empire's merchants, the influx of new peoples to Europe and the Mediterranean, and the emerging trading city-states along the Mediterranean primarily concentrated in Italy. Graham does not overtly contest the lack of Byzantine presence in the traditional scholarship. Indeed, his work on objecting to a solely Levantine-centered, Mediterranean economy is an immense step in the right direction of realizing what role the Byzantine Empire's economy had in

¹⁷⁸ Collins, 105.

shaping the Dark Age economy. Like this study, and following on Braudel's argument, Graham too acknowledges the development of Mediterranean trade prompted by the Crusades. Graham views the wars as a period, rather than a sudden burst of economic and political energy in 1099.¹⁷⁹ Perhaps, then, this exclusion of the Byzantine Empire in European economic development is more of an epistemological problem than one of a lack of information. The Gibbon-esque aversion to the Byzantine Empire is kept immortal in scholarship by separating the Byzantine Empire from the Western narrative. Separating Byzantine culture from Hellenistic and Roman culture¹⁸⁰ prevents truly understanding the importance of Byzantine civilization to shaping Western civilization, whether economically or culturally. Perhaps the solution lies with Karl Wittfogel's argument of viewing Roman economy and culture, and with that the Byzantine Empire, not as the traditional historical narrative of the West, but as a product of the Hellenistic East.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Brian Graham, "The Mediterranean in the Medieval and Renaissance World," *The Mediterranean: Environment and Society*, edited by Russell King, Lindsay Proudfoot, and Bernard Smith. (London: Arnold, 1997), 86-87.

¹⁸⁰ Fernand Braudel specifically argues that the Byzantine supplanting of rule was a break of Hellenic and Roman dominance towards a more 'Oriental' one. See: Braudel, 563.

¹⁸¹ Karl Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), 212.



Figure 3.8: The Mediterranean end Europe in the Tenth Century.¹⁸² Note the variety of powers lining the coast of the Mediterranean. A clear divide between north and south delineates Christian and Islamic powers.

Currents, naval technology, the centralized and urbanized nature of the Byzantine Empire, a present trade infrastructure, and even the physical location of the core of the Byzantine Empire all amounted to the perfect combination to dictate a maritime and mercantile character for the Byzantine Empire. It was this disposition that dictated much of the economic portion of Byzantine imperial

¹⁸² Euratlas. "Europe in Year 900." <http://www.euratlas.net/history/europe/900/index.html>.

character. Through economic coordination within and beyond its own borders, political influence helped reshape the character of Europe where Byzantine interaction was inevitable, necessary, and advantageous all at once. The traditional narrative of Italian republics trading as the catalyst for Western European reurbanization, therefore, owes much more attention than is given to the widespread trade and naval influence of the Byzantine Empire throughout the Mediterranean.

Chapter 4

A Coastal Heartland:

The Geostrategy of Byzantine Anatolia during the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries

Introduction

Since the days of the distinguished geographer and pioneering late Nineteenth Century German geographer Friedrich Ratzel, scholars have acknowledged the importance of trade to the development of civilization. Ratzel, as an “anthropogeographer,” asserted that the movement of peoples and an inevitable trade and interaction that ensued among them was the basis of advance and rising civilizations in human history. Ellen Churchill Semple argued that coasts, with their abundant yield of resources of sustenance and utility for humanity, and an accompanying ease of travel and navigation that littoral regions offered, enhanced and reinforced the assertion posited by Semple’s mentor, Ratzel.¹⁸³

As a Ratzel disciple, Semple indeed drew the connection of the Mediterranean’s environment to the development of this trade in her still memorable 1931 study, *Geography of the Mediterranean Region*. Irrigated and/or rainy lands yielded plentiful water, foodstuffs, and the products of luxury agriculture that were needed for the basis of building societies that could, in turn, become empires. Sophisticated coastal trade networks were put in place that

¹⁸³ Like Semple, Ratzel acknowledges not only the importance of waterbodies and trade to develop human civilization, but mentions directly the Mediterranean itself. See: Friedrich Ratzel, *The History of Mankind* (Hong Kong: Forgotten Books, 2012), 2-3.

would endure and serve to push Western civilization to and through the many trials that culturally shaped it in the millennia beyond the space and time of Antiquity.¹⁸⁴



Figure 4.1: A map of Greek and Phoenician colonies.¹⁸⁵ Map taken from a Project Gutenberg web publication of *Influences of Geographic Environment, On the Basis of Ratzel's System of Anthro-Geography*.

From a geostrategic standpoint, determining geopolitics relevant to the territory of the Eastern Roman Empire can be difficult. Paul Magdalino observes how little the scholarly community has spelled out in the way of contributions to

¹⁸⁴ Ellen Churchill Semple, *Geography of the Mediterranean Region* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), 660-688.

¹⁸⁵ Ellen Churchill Semple. "Influences of Geographic Environment, On the Basis of Ratzel's System of Anthro-Geography." Project Gutenberg. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15293/15293h/15293-h.htm>.

geographic theory and scholarship across the whole of the Byzantine era.¹⁸⁶ In terms of primary sources most applicable to geography, there are ethnographic accounts of regions and their inhabitants. Additionally, there are various travel logs available, to include decently thorough pilgrimage accounts and histories of the myriad of holy places the Empire ruled. Magdalino, with scholarly resourcefulness, then turns to primary documents not intended for geography for his assertions on the nature and substance of spatial-epistemological contributions of the Byzantine Empire. He singles out the political and historical work of Constantine VII. Magdalino posits that the Empire's scholars, for all their academic achievement, did not leave the field of geography solely to Strabo or to Byzantium's Islamic neighbors.

Quite the contrary, Magdalino asserts the imperial policies and religious heritage of the Roman Empire continued. The Byzantine economy relied on water and land based trade. Moreover, there were consistent technological breakthroughs for military and economic purposes. In this vein, Magdalino argues the Empire's inhabitants could not possibly be void of spatial thought. The detailed cartographic productions of Constantinople and reproductions of Ptolemaic maps from the whole of the Byzantine era certainly dictate otherwise.^{187 188} Indeed, the awareness of space and natural law (as it was

¹⁸⁶ For the purposes of this argument, the whole Byzantine era indicates the early Fourth Century — approximately AD 330 to the fall of Trebizond in AD 1461.

¹⁸⁷ Paul Magdalino, "Constantine VII and the Historical Geography of Empire," *Imperial Geographies in Byzantine and Ottoman Space* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013) 23-27.

viewed in Hellenic culture) was realized as early as the colonization of the coast of Anatolia.¹⁸⁹ It is no coincidence that trade between Achaean and Anatolia spurred the development of conceptualizing space and helped develop the scholarly field of geography; indeed, it is from this part of the world that the Western tradition of geography was born. The importance of spatial analysis endured in this region. By trading across the Black, Achaean, and Mediterranean Seas, geostrategy necessitating domination and defense of this region developed. As trade along these seas radically changed the landscape and regional economy over time through coastal colonization, the promise of prosperity by ruling these trading lands grew wildly.¹⁹⁰

As Magdalino contends, geography can be yielded by examining political documents. In this vein, geopolitics can also be determined by drawing on previous scholarship geared toward economic, military, and political history. For instance, the militarily and economically motivated placement of Constantinople lends insight into a spatially minded imperial administration. Whether by sole

¹⁸⁸ Magdalino is not the only scholar to notice the lack of geography in the Byzantine era on the whole. G.L. Huxley, like Magdalino, asserts that there was a focus during this era on the work of Strabo and directs to Constantine VII as the only major source of direct geography for the Eastern Roman Empire. He hypothesizes the Romans did not specifically advance the field of geography for such a long era, despite scholarly capability to do so, because doing so would cause a break in the classical past to which the Romans of this period so desperately clung. If the world were surveyed during any point in the Byzantine period, it would look much different than from when Strabo did so, even in simple terms of place names — many of which were simply no longer Greek to the local inhabitants. See: G.L. Huxley, "Topics in Byzantine Historical Geography," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics Literature*, 82C (1982), 89-110, specifically 90.

¹⁸⁹ Lukas Thommen, *An Environmental History of Ancient Greece and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4.

¹⁹⁰ Thommen, 19.

divine intervention or by the operational foresight (as well as disenchantment with the old capital) of Constantine I, the quickly manifesting strategic potential of Constantinople would be impossible to ignore in succeeding imperial regimes. Indeed, it was already apparent the burgeoning trade of the East required an oriented administration to ensure the continued success and maximum economic gain, to speak nothing of the strategic advantage of the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn.¹⁹¹ Given the high esteem in which Strabo was held by the educated inhabitants of the Empire,¹⁹² Strabo's insistence on scholars and rulers to hold a welleducated command on strategic echelon geographical reasoning and knowledge,¹⁹³ as well as an evident understanding of spatiality in popular consciousness (at least in the context of Constantinople as the epicenter of the world),¹⁹⁴ any imperial administration without some spatial directive would have fallen under heavy scrutiny.

During the regional dominance of the Byzantine Empire of the period in question, a deliberate geostrategy under imperial direction governed the command of territory and handling of borders. Economic, political, and military aspects of this imperial effort are elements in the practice of geopolitical control. The various cycles of imperial triumph and defeat reflect an imperial vision of continual prosperity of trade and defense centered on Constantinople. In

¹⁹¹ John Norwich, *Byzantium: The Early Centuries* (New York: 1989) 62-65.

¹⁹² Dimitar Angelov, "Asian and Europe Commonly Called East and West," *Imperial Geographies in Byzantine and Ottoman Space* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013) 52-53.

¹⁹³ Strabo. Loeb Library, "Geographia." Last modified 2012. Accessed April 20, 2013. I:13-26.

¹⁹⁴ Angelov, 53-57.

particular, this policy from the onset of the Tenth to Eleventh Centuries is marked around assured prosperity (as the imperial administration in Constantinople viewed it) by secured maritime routes. These routes, throughout the Empire's history, centered largely on the territory of the Black and Achaean Seas' secure access to the Mediterranean.

Thesis

This article contends the Crusader period of the Byzantine Empire, as captured by the aforementioned time window, was a critical demonstration of the priorities of Byzantine geostrategy. Faced with a well-understood and limited timeframe, imperial administrations used the fortunes and misfortunes the Crusades and its surrounding events offered to secure and maintain the coasts of Anatolia for the purposes of ensuring economic strategy and pursuing a strategic policy of Anatolian hegemony through coastal dominance. This strategy ultimately ensured the longevity of the Byzantine Empire for a few more centuries, despite the dramatic geographic misfortunes leading to the period in question.

The Importance of Water

This era is noteworthy as representing a turning point in Byzantine trade. Specifically, the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries demonstrate a refocus once more

on interaction across the Achaean and Black seas and into the Mediterranean.¹⁹⁵ Urban density and general inhabitation had dwindled since the era of Justinian and the various invasions in Anatolia since the Seventh Century. However, archaeological evidence indicates the Roman Empire focused on expanding and fortifying the trading settlements on these coasts into defensible positions. Chris Wickham poignantly observes the imperial government “never entirely lost a network of exchange that covered its heartland, the Aegean and Marmara Seas and the coasts around them.”¹⁹⁶ The actual geographic location of the Empire, in addition to this evidence of widespread internal and external trade, certainly reinforces the idea of spatial awareness among the inhabitants of at least coastal Anatolia and its various leaders during this period.

The Byzantine Empire has already been equated with the idea of centralized state control far beyond contemporary societies in the West. Karl Wittfogel specifically studies the Byzantine era of the Roman Empire. He argues that central economic control, in the vein of “Hellenization” (equivocal to “Orientalization”), embodies the nature of *Oriental Despotism* from a literal perspective.¹⁹⁷ Wittfogel asserts this system of centralization in terms of military,

¹⁹⁵ For a thorough examination of the impact of sericulture trade from Constantinople throughout the Empire in the era in question, see: David Jacoby, "Silk in Western Byzantium Before the Fourth Crusade," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 84-85, no. 2 (2009): 452-500.

¹⁹⁶ Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 353-355. Wickham argues the *kastra* of the Anatolian coasts were increased in fortification and expanded as the Empire advanced. While this style of fortification is still fundamentally military in nature, it differs from the traditional Roman fortress ‘*castra*’ in the sense it is a functioning town.

¹⁹⁷ Karl Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 211. Wittfogel observes that this process of centralizing economic control and a

economic, and diplomacy met an apogee of absolutism during the era of concern for this article.¹⁹⁸ Further, Wittfogel observes the movement of the imperial economic focus from agricultural regions (such as Egypt or the Fertile Crescent) toward the more trade-oriented coasts.¹⁹⁹ Although Wittfogel states the Byzantine economy moved toward a central control in terms of trade,²⁰⁰ he does not assert the imperial regimes at any point during the Byzantine period intentionally directed geopolitical focus toward these Anatolian coasts. It seems implausible the Empire would not have had as much of an influence on trade as it did on its geopolitics. After all, coastal land was critical to trade. The Eastern Roman Empire embodied this centralized despotic style of government, to include land usage.

Centralized Control

Angeliki Laiou and Cécile Morrisson argue in favor of this central control of the economy in the Byzantine system. This is not to say that there was trade throughout the Empire and with its neighbors that did not pass through

shift toward “eastern” absolutist culture predates the foundation of the Roman Empire.

¹⁹⁸ Wittfogel, 174. Although Wittfogel argues the Battle of Manzikert was a turning point away from centralized order, more Byzantine directed scholarship holds that the absolutist and not quite feudal nature of the Byzantine monarchy continued to evolve in a centralized direction after this period. The centralized nature of the Empire was mimicked after the disaster of the Fourth Crusade and gained even more absolute control during the reign of House Palaiologos. See: Steven Runciman, *Byzantine Civilization* (New York: Meridian Books, 1964), 76-77.

¹⁹⁹ Wittfogel, 170.

²⁰⁰ This should not be construed as an absolutist implication: at no point did the Roman Empire ever have total control over every aspect of their trade — intentionally so. What the Empire chose to control or not control was to the intended benefit of the perpetuation of the state. See: Angeliki Laiou, and Cécile Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), especially 234.

Constantinople. Rather, critical trade to the Empire, including foodstuffs,²⁰¹ textiles, ceramics, precious metals, coinage, and other strategically important resources, usually had heavy involvement from the state. These resources passed through-Constantinople in order to ensure proper duties and tributes were paid to the state.²⁰² The traders of the Empire were well aware the environmental conditions for this trade and the routes necessary to reach Constantinople involved access along the Anatolian coasts.²⁰³ There were, therefore, pragmatic reasons for this shift toward a coastal heartland in Wickham's argument; simply, the imperial administrators would have needed these territories to ensure the safe and effective passage of vessels vital to the vast trade industry and filling the imperial coffers.

Previous scholarship demonstrates the geographical usefulness of Constantine VII, despite his intended narrative of political action and reaction in an historical context. The emperor was naturally building on a scholarly spatial tradition of the earlier Roman Empire and more contemporary scholarly

²⁰¹ Evidence of this central control is given in an account by John Skylitzes when the Emperor Nikephoros II manipulates the price of grain and the supply by using the imperial reserve in a rather dramatic account of him releasing the supply for high prices, then later lowering them after an emotional appeal by his subjects. See: John Skylitzes, translated by John Wortley, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History: 811-1057* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010), 266-267.

²⁰² Laiou and Morriison, 33-36.

²⁰³ Laiou and Morriison, 15-16. See page 18 for a brief summary of the legal obligations of the state to ensuring trade control in the continuity of Roman law. Laiou and Morriison also note naval technology of the time would have restricted these vessels on the routes along the Anatolian coast. For a thorough treatment on the implications of this technology, see: John H. Pryor, *Geography, Technology, and War: Studies in the Maritime History of the Mediterranean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

predecessors.²⁰⁴ In addressing what he viewed as the distinctly possible threat of rebellion in the colonial Cherson, Constantine VII instructs:

...all Chersonite ships at Constantinople must be impounded with their cargoes...three imperial agents must be sent: one to the coast of the province of Armeniakoi, another to the coast of the province of Paphlagonia, and another to the coast of the province of Boukellarioi, in order to take possession of all Chersonite ships, and to impound the cargo and the ships...Moreover, these imperial agents must forbid the Paphlagonian and Boukellarian merchant-ships and coastal vessels of Pontus to cross to Cherson with grain or wine or any other needful commodity or merchandise.

Constantine understands, in his account, that the inhabitants of Cherson Province rely on trade along and across the Black Sea to maintain authority and vigor. Cherson required a hand in the fur trade with the neighboring Pechenegs as well as grain from Anatolia. In terms of resources, Constantine notes that the Empire drew naphtha from Cherson.

Nevertheless, local trade drew administrative attention from the highest office, and deviation from this model, whether by disruption or rebellion, would prove fatal. At the heart of Constantine instruction, however, is the importance of keeping the Pontic region available for Black Sea trade, which, at the very least thrived in several locales with trade with the Byzantine colonial Cherson. A grain trade destined for Cherson had to be kept flowing, and under a degree of Roman dominion, if for no other reason than to ensure Cherson would not fall to attrition.²⁰⁵ Yet, defense of these ports does not begin to address the importance of keeping trade avenues in Pontus open for trade with surrounding areas such

²⁰⁴ Angelov, 45-49.

²⁰⁵ Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, Translated by R.J.H. Jenkins (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) 285-287.

as inland Anatolia, Armenia, and locations along the Black Sea coast.



Figure 4.2: The organization of the *themata* (provinces) of Anatolia.²⁰⁶

Runciman argues by the onset of the Tenth Century, Constantinople's role as a trade hub expanded to serve well beyond the Empire and longstanding Mediterranean ports. There was abundant trade with the Islamic world across the whole Mediterranean with direct routes in Anatolia through Syria and into Baghdad,²⁰⁷ in addition to notable routes down into Egypt. These goods were

²⁰⁶ Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. See:

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Byzantine_Themes,_950.gif

²⁰⁷ This is not to say trade with the Islamic world and the Byzantine Empire was ongoing and by no means were these powers amiable at certain points in their history. Indeed, in the previous century to the one in question, a more famous example of tensions manifests when Ibn Fadlan

taken through the capital for the purposes of consumption and/or duties. Cities on the western Anatolian coast, especially Smyrna, played an important role in shipping these eastern products. Northern trade occurred as well. As mentioned above by Constantine VII, Cherson and Trebizond specifically were critical ports for trade with the Rus, Central Asia, and the Caucasus.²⁰⁸ The mercantile and manufacturing sector of the Byzantine economy relied directly on the continuous function of these ports, especially concerning the vast transport of agriculture and sericulture.²⁰⁹

chooses to travel much farther into Central Asia in order to reach the Volga Bulgar king's court rather than risk entering the Roman Empire. See: Stewart Gordon, *When Asia Was the World: Traveling Merchants, Scholars, Warriors, and Monks Who Created the 'Riches of the East'* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2009), 24.

²⁰⁸ Michael Attaleiates records a large trade hub just south of Trebizond in Artze, which is in proximity to the fortified Theodosiopolis. He states this place traded products from Persia, India, and "the rest of Asia." Trebizond would have most certainly been a crucial port for the widespread distribution of these goods throughout the Empire. Trebizond and its immediate surroundings would have been, and indeed were, areas of critical imperial attention for defense. See: Michael Attaleiates, *The History*, Translated by Anthony Kaldellis and Dimitris Krallis (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 271.

²⁰⁹ Steven Runciman, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus and His Reign: A Study of Tenth Century Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 22.



Figure 4.3: The Roman Empire at its apogee during the High Middle Ages.²¹⁰

Imperial administrations guarded principal existence (in the Machiavellian sense) by guarding the flow into the coffers; the regimes must have known the secure hold on these cities was critical for income. In the same vein, the larger the land buffer for these hubs, the better. In terms of military operations, the greater amount of Anatolian land between crucial ports like Smyrna and adversary-controlled territory meant a more ample warning system to prepare defense. Logically, expansion inland into the peninsula certainly must have factored in the protection of the vibrant coastal cities.

The trade of these port cities and the Empire's hold on surrounding lands

²¹⁰ Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. See: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ByzantineEmpire1025AD2lightpurple.PNG>

was also important to the imperial agricultural production. During the period in question, the imperial economy was mostly self-sufficient for its grain production. Coastal Anatolia not only distributed grain, but was also an important source of grain for the Empire — specifically Bithynia.²¹¹ Grain production was focused more in Europe, but coastal Anatolia nevertheless had a hand in feeding the Empire. Noteworthy also is during this period the interior of Anatolia was more focused on meat production.²¹² The inland meat-production economy may also explain why the succeeding emperors were more driven to defend and retake the coastal provinces rather than focus efforts on capturing the highlands, after the Battle of Manzikert and the fall of interior Anatolia. Certainly, the production of wheat in Bithynia along the straits would be useful for feeding nearby, vibrant, and densely populated Constantinople. From this standpoint, the emperors of this period had a direct interest in keeping control of the meeting point of the Black Sea and the Straits, to speak nothing of simple, direct access into Asia from the capital.

Operations and Strategy

The imperial loss at Manzikert doubtlessly threw the Empire into disarray.

Although this loss would not be curtailed until the reign of Alexios I in the era of the Crusades, reconquest of this critical Bithynian coast was vitally important to

²¹¹ Comprised of the Optimaton and parts of the Bucellarion and Opsikon *themata*.

²¹² Laiou and Morriison, 97. The authors observe Turkish occupation of interior Anatolia also results in the shift of meat production toward Europe as well.

the previous imperial administration of Nikephoros III. Nikephoros was free to begin reconquest once order had been established in the capital and the regime was stable. Nikephoros was willing to outfit a host of soldiers with “generous gifts and supplies that far surpassed the usual ones” in order to retake Bithynia and its capital. Such a campaign was thought by Michael Attaleiates to be sufficient to “establish calm, quiet, and security over such a large part of the world.” However, once the host crossed from the capital to the other side of the Bosphorus, the troops resisted advancing further inward toward Nikephoros’s objective. A second host, less loyal and comprised of mostly archers, was sent to augment this first. However, the soldiers and their commander ultimately sought to form a rebellion against the emperor, which was only subsided by great support from the Senate.²¹³ Nevertheless, Nikephoros’s deliberate actions show a clearly placed set of spatial priorities. His actions demonstrated priority to secure access along the Sea of Marmara for the safety of the capital, access to Bithynian grain, and normalization of the critical trade routes between the Black and Achaean Seas. There were specific points in this long period when the regime took attention deliberately from Anatolia. Warren Treadgold observes that shortly after the disaster that ensued for the Byzantine Empire at the Battle of Manzikert, Alexios I deliberately withdrew the army from Anatolia to instead repel the Norman invasion of the western half of the Empire. This previous scholarship does not necessarily point out a weakness in the importance of the Anatolian coasts.

²¹³ Attaleiates, 559-563.

Indeed, the Romans instead retained the coasts of the Straits and certain pockets such as Trebizond along the Pontus. On the other hand, Alexios decided to repel the Normans, and further withdrew troops from further inland Anatolia. Anatolia was scarcely defended by these decisions, in addition to the withdrawals previously undertaken by Constantine IX.²¹⁴ Yet, the pockets of Anatolia successfully defended could be considered to be a vital link in the overall strategy of the government and Mediterranean economics. Foremost, the emperor had to repel immediate threat to the cultural Greek heartland in Achaea and imminent danger to Constantinople. Additionally, Alexios quite possibly engaged in this geopolitical withdrawal consciously to ensure the retained areas of Anatolia would not be isolated completely from trade and support from the western part of the Empire. Therefore, the retained Anatolian lands would have direct and necessary access to the Mediterranean. The advised emperor doubtlessly acted in a manner to ensure the prolonged survival of the Empire faced with a pincer attack of a dual set of adversaries.

Alexios did not restrict his military strategy to ensuring the safety of the European side of the Empire in the years leading to the First Crusade. A part of his strategic focus included renewal of the imperial fleet. Moreover, it entailed regaining hegemony over the critical access to the Black Sea in Pontus,

²¹⁴ Warren Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army: 284-1081* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995) 217-219.

reclaiming conquered Achaean islands that could be a threat to trade and operations into the Mediterranean, and putting down rebellions in Crete, Cyprus, and the Dodecanese.²¹⁵ Geopolitically, Alexios's decision to secure the islands in these seas prior to advancing into Anatolia demonstrates a progressive strategy. First, the strategy ensured that current trade and operations would not be disrupted by rebellion. Second, it rebuilt a semblance of order within the administration. Finally, it allowed for an easier landing in Anatolia by reasserting naval superiority in the region, as opposed to risk a disruption by the rebels or Turkish occupational forces damaging the transporting navies en route to Anatolia.



Figure 4.4: The Roman Empire during the reign of Alexios I, prior to the Crusades.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 617-618.

²¹⁶ Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. See: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Byzantium1081ADlightpurple.PNG>

The years leading to the Crusades were not a break in previous policies during the Byzantine period in terms of a strategic focus on naval operations. The imperial forces had a focus on naval operations in terms of assuring military and economic success since at least the era of Justinian. In the Tenth Century in particular, the Achaean Sea was under direct threat by Arabic occupation of the archipelago, with specific attention to Crete. Of such concern was this to the imperial administration, three large expeditions were sent to put the island back into Roman hands.²¹⁷ Geopolitically, this would assure the isle of Crete, rich with a history of trade raiding, would no longer be of issue in the contiguous access of the imperial heartland to the Mediterranean.

Alexios, however, did not simply let the important access to the Achaean and the Black Sea in Anatolia fall to Turkish dominion, even if his reconquest campaigns were not his first executed priority. In fact, the importance of coastal access in Anatolia during this period was not unnoticed by others in this theater of operations. Malik-Shah I was willing to offer coastal Anatolia under Turkish occupation to Alexios I in exchange for Anna's²¹⁸ hand in marriage. Alexios displayed profound interest in this diplomatic offer, despite having no actual intent to marry off Anna to the territorial adversaries; it was a feint, but excellent dynastic geopolitics. Alexios was willing to offer territorial governorship in exchange for "Romanizing" the messenger of this offer, Siaoous, by baptism and

²¹⁷ Edward Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2009), 333-334.

²¹⁸ Anna Komnene, daughter of Alexios Komnenos and author of *The Alexiad*.

removing him from Turkish dominion:

Then without even referring to the question of marriage, and having noticed that Siauus was a sensible man, Alexios asked him where he came from and who his parents were...The emperor was much concerned to have him baptized and Siauus consented to this. He gave pledges, moreover, that he would not return to the sultan once he had obtained that holy rite.

Siauus used the diplomatic authority delegated to him after this deal was concluded with Alexios and began the process of securing the Anatolian coast once more into Byzantine dominion:

He had a written order from the sultan which gave him the right to remove all satraps from the coastal towns they had occupied. All he had to do was to produce this document, if the emperor showed himself willing to conclude the marriage agreement.

Alexios used this offer to his advantage and managed to regain Sinope through this cunning diplomatic offer without bloodshed or diplomatic cost:

With great enthusiasm, Siauus visited Sinope first, revealed the sultan's letter to Kharatikos and made him leave the place without taking possession of a single obol of the imperial money.²¹⁹

The reclaimed territory could prove once again to be advantageous for the trade routes with Cherson along the Black Sea. Additionally, the profits from this trade could be sent to Constantinople and thereafter flow down the Achaean into

²¹⁹ Anna Komnene, *The Alexiad*. Translated by E.R.A Sewter (New York: Penguin Classics, 2009) 170-171.

the Mediterranean, thanks to the successful defense from the earlier Norman invasions.

This diplomatic triumph for Alexios would not stand on its own without military support or ensuring contiguous territorial connection and a buffer zone around those critical trade ports. Naturally, the emperor sent out a trusted commander, Tatikios, for a dual-purpose mission. First, Tatikios was to regain holdings in Bithynia toward Nicaea. Second, Tatikios was directed to ensure that the navy under construction by the Turks was to be destroyed — burned or staved-in and sunk — for the purposes of preventing piracy against Roman vessels. Tatikios's campaign poised the emperor once again to engage in his pattern of subterfuge in diplomacy against the Turkish ruler, Apelkhasem. An opportunity was afforded Alexios to expunge the Turks from Nikomedia and ensure the capture and an imperial hold of the straits of the Bosphorus for the Empire.²²⁰

So could Alexios ensure economic, naval, and trade dominance in one fell action, he poised the Empire's forces to reassert Roman hegemony over seas that were vital to imperial trade territories and routes. Perhaps the most impressive pieces of evidence for Alexios's maritime-based geostrategy is when Western Europe heeded the call to assist in battle against the invading infidel. The coastal hold in Anatolia by the Empire was geographically close to the center of Turkish power in Nicaea.

²²⁰ Komnene, 172-178.

When the besieging crusaders of the adversarial capital were tricked into a retreat from their looting — and instead found the city transferred back to Byzantine dominion — Alexios did not immediately turn his attentions to pursuing the Turkish hegemony inward to the interior of Anatolia.²²¹

He instead made a strategic decision to turn southward toward the more contested Achaean Sea, securing the capture of Smyrna, which was demoralized by the decisive joint victory at Nicaea.²²² Geostrategically, capturing Smyrna would certainly afford the Empire a better route of access in the major trade routes in question. Alexios, like Runciman centuries later, no doubt took notice of the importance Smyrna played in the history of the Byzantine economy.

Imperial attentions on the Anatolian coasts were not restricted simply to action and reaction in a military, diplomatic, or other administrative function. Indeed, the whole of the organization of the Empire in Anatolia was focused on ensuring successful trade to accommodate the effective movement of grain. Antaolia was organized during this period by keeping naval forces concentrated in the southwest and defended by ground forces that left a buffered defensive zone in the Anatolian interior.²²³ In the same vein of imperial planning as a geopolitical force in the region, the administrations during this period kept the

²²¹ Komnene, 296-304.

²²² Komnene, 310-311.

²²³ Treadgold (1995), 107-109. Naval forces during this period were concentrated in the Cibyrhaeots *thema*. Near the Dodacanese and Crete, security of this province's coast meant a secure access from the Achaean into the Mediterranean. For this reason, the expedition to Crete was geographically vital to effective naval operations in the Mediterranean. It is hardly coincidental then, that the navy should be placed in proximity to a region so vibrant with domestic and external trading.

area under tight control and devoted much attention to it. After the aforementioned reconquest of Crete, coastal provinces experienced an increase economic growth prompted by successful trade and naval safety.

The success of this organization is evident from the level of prosperity experienced when the conquests of the beginning of the Eleventh Century ended raids in the coastal Anatolian provinces. Armenia served as the borderland buffer, as opposed to the more economically sensitive interior of the peninsula. Additionally, critical cities such as Trebizond, Smyrna, Sinope, and the like were well protected.²²⁴ This intentional organization of the peninsula likely²²⁵ was built on previous imperial borders with the same intent of delineating and securing trade. The idea that Anatolia was an important population and trade center of the Byzantine Empire, and one located in a critical region worthy of geopolitical and strategic attention was not new.

This legacy of the importance of coastal access and a coastal focus geostrategy endured in the Byzantine Empire after the fall of Constantinople to the Franks and Italian city-states in the Fourth Crusade. Of the powers that

²²⁴ Treadgold (1997), 536-540. The conquest of Armenia ushered a new era of growth and prosperity for coastal Anatolia especially. Notably, Dr. Treadgold observes that the Armenian occupation was resisted, but given the level of instability Armenia held compared to the Empire, many Armenians were in favor of imperial occupation to facilitate domestic and foreign safety.

²²⁵ Treadgold (1995), 108. Treadgold argues previous scholarship proposed the Anatolian *themata* were bordered on roughly the same earlier Roman imperial provinces. Although evidence of these borders is not absolutely certain, the notion of division of Anatolia for the purposes of ensuring economic prosperity and military success should not be isolated to this era in question solely.

emerged during this chaotic period,²²⁶ unsurprisingly, the two in Anatolia were focused on the hubs of trade and strategy previously discussed. The first, the Empire of Nicaea, was a part of eastern Bithynia and held access to the Achaean and Mediterranean contiguously. The second, the Empire of Trebizond, spread across the Black Sea along the Pontic range would endure beyond the fall of Constantinople.²²⁷ Much like the trade and strategic setback that occurred in the years following the Battle of Manzikert, it would not take long for the Empire under the direction of House Laskaris and House Palaiologos to begin and largely succeed in their reconquest of the western half of the Empire, to include Constantinople itself.²²⁸ In a somewhat poetic turn, the same economic and strategic prompts that turned the attention of previous emperors to the Anatolian coast may very well have caused the succeeding Laskarid emperors to secure much of the Achaean coast before turning to Constantinople. The dramatic loss and sack of the capital, as well as the turn of economic trade and naval power to the mercantile Italian city-states, took its toll. Unlike the Battle of Manzikert, the Fourth Crusade, despite the reconquest of Roman lands, was truly the beginning of the end for the Empire.²²⁹

²²⁶ The establishment of the "Empire of Trebizond," however, was not a direct result of the Fourth Crusade's conquest of the capital, but did come to pass in the prior weeks.

²²⁷ John Norwich, *A Short History of Byzantium* (New York: Random House, 1999), 305-307. Of notable interest, the "Empire of Trebizond," in a long-term fulfillment of Constantine VII's strategy of keeping Cherson sustained and promoting trade with it and the Pontic coast, continued to rule over these lands after this branch of House Komnenos separated from the rest of the Empire in exile. See: Angelov, 59.

²²⁸ Norwich (1997), 735-737.

²²⁹ Luttwak, 234.

Conclusion

The historical twist-and-shout of the Roman Empire into a “Byzantine” Empire is marked by significant political paradigm shifts: the division of East and West, the Wittfogel-spirited turn to absolutist “Orientalization,” the official incorporation of the Greek language, the conversion to Christianity, and/or (quite conveniently) the foundation of Constantinople. Perhaps among these historiographical arguments, all of which hold merit, a more geopolitical note should be incorporated into the discourse. Specifically, there is a Byzantine trait, which Laiou and Morrison termed as a “maritime character” of the Eastern Roman Empire.²³⁰ The so-called Byzantine period should be marked by absolutism, Greek, and Christianity, in addition to a distinct period of thalassocracy.

Although not articulated by any contemporary or past scholar, the Byzantine Empire’s leaders undoubtedly understood what they were doing when they pursued the recapture and security of the Anatolian coasts for strategic and economic purposes during this period. Through the revitalization and ensuing prosperity the successful execution of this strategy offered, the Byzantine Empire was able to revive more outward-looking imperial strategies well beyond its borders. Byzantine history endured centuries after, though ultimately in decline, albeit nowhere near as fast had the utilization of the Crusader period’s fortunes not transpired as they did.

²³⁰ Laiou and Morrison, 13.

Chapter 5

In Conclusion

Summary

This dissertation, I hope as its author, works as a relatively versatile document, with each chapter serving as a standalone article or a monograph, yet with a continuous theme analyzing aspects of imperial geography across Byzantine time and space.

For the purpose of my dissertation arguments, imperial geography constitutes the geographic factors that determine the character of an empire. This dissertation devotes one chapter to each of the three major factors that determine the nature of the Byzantine Empire: geopolitics, geoeconomics, and geostrategy. According to Colin Gray, strategy and policy cannot be determined without one another because of their interwoven and mutually guiding nature. In addition, geography determines how each is executed. Often it is the same, if not a closely related group of people, who determine the dimensions of policy and strategy.²³¹ This dissertation includes an economic factor as the material basis and justification for these geopolitics and geostrategies.

When such fields are combined, the collective field of imperial geography is understood to a much better degree than would be possible, were the arguments wrapped in thin tissues of faint distinction. Moreover, as the

²³¹ Geoffrey Sloan and Colin S. Gray, "Why Geopolitics?," *Geopolitics: Geography and Strategy* (London, Frank Cass, 1999), 6.

geographer D.W. Meinig argues,²³² what separates imperial geography from a simple regional study is its impact on other states; the empire cannot be that at all without imposing imperial control on other powers. This dissertation demonstrates that point throughout each chapter.

“Of Environments and Emperors” (Ch. 2) presents what I believe is a unique piece of Byzantine scholarship. Although many scholars have alluded to the various components of imperial geography, there is no strict categorization of Byzantine geopolitics. Ch. 2 is placed near the beginning of the project because it accomplishes three major goals: First, it shows Byzantine imperial expansion was heavily rooted in religious justification. The mission of the Byzantine Empire’s rulers was the propagation and maintenance of the Church; the emperors saw their Empire as the defender and core of the Eastern Church. Second, the Byzantine Empire was a maritime trading power that sought to secure coastal land. Coastal land would be defended with inland conquests, however major inland conquests were absent from Byzantine imperial policy.

The Byzantine model was based on a hierarchical support of imperial trading cities, with Constantinople as its highest priority. A model for the utilization of land to support and defend the imperial city is spelled out by California-based historical geographer and architectural historian Gray

²³² D.W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective of 500 Years of History, Volume 1: Atlantic America, 1492-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), xvi-xviii.

Brechin.²³³ Finally, a third goal of Ch. 2 is to show how the Byzantine Empire's imperial model was centrally focused — an embodiment of Karl Wittfogel's *Oriental Despotism*.²³⁴ Without such tight central control, the Byzantine Empire could not be the maritime power its rulers sought it to be. These three factors are compared against other powers with a similar imperial pattern, ultimately proving the Byzantine Empire to be largely unique in its imperial policy. Still, the Byzantine Empire fits well into multiple scholars' definition of empire.

Chapter 3 expounds upon the material nature of the Byzantine Empire and further elucidates Meinig's theme of analyzing the empire in question through an external lens. In other words, this chapter-article explores how imperial policies affect the Empire's neighbors. Ch. 3 does challenge a developmental aspect of the Annales School, espoused by scholars such as Fernand Braudel who were concerned in salutary ways with economics, society, and institutions.²³⁵ This work shows the importance of the Byzantine trade economy in maintaining its imperial structure.

Trade across the Mediterranean Basin was necessary for the Empire's survival. A basis grounded in trade accomplished two feats. Developing an explanation initially explored in the previous chapter, Ch. 3 creates a geopolitical model for the Byzantine Empire. Unlike most of the neighbor-states of Byzantium,

²³³ Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), xxxi.

²³⁴ Karl Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 170.

²³⁵ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 563-566.

the Byzantine maritime-based economy supported its agriculture, administrative, and military endeavors. In this regard, the Byzantine Empire stands as an anomaly in traditional economic development theory.²³⁶ Second, this article develops oceanographic and historical evidence of the importance of the Byzantine economy in European development. It deviates from Braudel's model in showing how Byzantine trade with the Islamic world was at least as important as the broader western European trade. Byzantine trade with the Islamic states advanced economic power and helped support a re-urbanizing Europe. Most importantly, this chapter shows marriage of economy to strategy and policy. With proper economic and political context, the field of geostrategy has a rational basis for its execution. For this reason, the final chapter of this work is placed after the first two. Specifically, Ch. 4 uses as its case study the Crusades and the Byzantine Empire. The period is remarkable because after a series of defeats that nearly destroyed all Byzantine influence in the Anatolian peninsula, the Empire received a sudden influx of recognizable authority, power, and the economic autonomy and military forces capable of reversing what had been languishing fortunes.

Ch. 4 in this dissertation offers two major theses, in its use of primary and secondary historical sources. First, the Byzantine maritime character was reinforced by its war-fighting strategy; the Byzantine Empire maintained and held

²³⁶ Gregory Clark, *A Farewell to Alms: A Brief Economic History of the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 24.

cities critical to its trade. Doing so kept the Empire economically prosperous, agriculturally stable (despite the loss of inland territory), and a continuous imperial power in the Mediterranean Basin. In a second thesis, Ch. 4 further identifies the execution of a clearly conscious Byzantine strategy. The Empire was not solely reliant on naval and land supremacy to ensure its victories. Rather, I argue that a combination of military strategy, diplomatic policy, and clandestine operations worked in concert to ensure broader geostrategic goals met with success.

Any originality in Ch. 4 lies not in the evidence it uses to prove its point. But no previous scholar has plainly argued for the persistent coastal focus of the Byzantine Empire during its campaigning. Maritime trade was critical to the character and stability of the Empire. Ch. 4 asserts that this strategy was not articulated by Byzantine analysts of the Middle Ages because the coastal geostrategy was obvious — it was nothing that needed to be stated overtly. Instead, the culmination of geopolitics, a geoeconomic focus on trade, and previous patterns of conquest all worked toward a naval focus of the Empire that was obvious to every inhabitant, and certainly to those who had power and authority to shape decisions and actions over the long and evolving epoch of Byzantine power. Any contribution made by this overall dissertation, therefore, is not in its uncovering of new and glimmering facets of the Byzantine Empire. Of course, additional contributions to Byzantine scholarship are presumably welcome and desired. Rather, this dissertation seeks a new approach to the

field of geography that calls for the unification of strategy, economics, and politics. Such an approach to policy and strategy is necessary for any serious analysis; the difficulty there lies in finding a conjunction of fact, strategy, analysis, and viable conclusion.²³⁷

The introduction of an economic element that justifies the case's approach to these fields delivers a fuller context. Moreover, this dissertation asserts that the economic and cultural character of the Byzantine Empire in its time and situation are derived largely from the physical geography of the place in question. So is a geographic perspective used to better understand circumstances, which may serve as the basis for additional fields of study.

Lessons Learned

The broad approach to geography this dissertation advocates is painfully lacking in today's historical-geographical education. One of the most beautiful aspects of geography is its multifaceted take on the disciplines of social science and history. Through geography, a greater familiarity with the world is gained; literally, a world of knowledge and possibility is opened.

Among the problems of geography is its conception as an exclusively academic discipline. Those who encounter the term "geography" are too focused on the simple "where." This idea was captured perfectly by a scenario related by Dr. Victoria Randlett to her graduate students: "Mark my words, when you

²³⁷ Sloan and Gray, 11.

introduce yourself at a party as a geographer, someone will grin stupidly and ask you what the capital of Montana is.” Her sentiments are echoed by this dissertation. Trivia is not the point of geography, and more than dates can be said to define history, or artifacts archaeology. Rather, geography should serve as a bridge between academic disciplines. While understanding the specific locales of the world is important, they are only important inasmuch as they are relevant to the broader goal of learning.

The absence of geography in the preparation of a postsecondary school environment is all too obvious. Social studies curriculum has come to rely greatly on history as its backbone in leading to higher education and the professional world. While history is itself in need of greater attention in American education, there is a greater implication of a failure to the other social sciences. Therefore, the drawback of ignorance rooted in American exceptionalism rears an ugly Medusa-like head. Simply, the world remains a mysterious place to the advancing student, and the drive to know more simply does not exist. This damages the quality of American human capital and deteriorates the ability of the United States of America to compete in a global market. The capacity to critically analyze and relate history, religion, economics, philosophy, sociology, psychology, and other fields through a geographic bridge is crucial. This skill ensures a continually prosperous America in an increasingly globalized world. If this dissertation inspires nothing else, it should demonstrate that these fields work together to illuminate more fully on human nature, whether in an historical

or contemporary context. An eclectic approach to geography should “tie apparently disparate phenomena together in meaningful ways.”²³⁸

This broad approach to social discovery should not be restricted to academic fields. One of the most heinous embarrassments in recent American history was the faulty nature of United States intelligence prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom despite possessing the most sophisticated clandestine information gathering network in world history. Arguably, this is in part because the intelligence network was too operationally focused and lacked a grander narrative in the same spirit argued above.

Geographic intelligence (GEOINT, in the parlance of the U.S. Pentagon) should not be viewed as simply a deeper physiographic and climatological analysis of imagery intelligence (IMINT). Rather, geography should be utilized to its fullest potential, from a cultural and physical perspective, in formulating strategy and policy, since the two are so intimately connected. Deeper ties between the academic, political, and military are necessary to ensure proper decision-making in each of the individual fields. Therefore, one of the goals of this dissertation is to demonstrate how commonly available sources, similar to open-source intelligence (OSINT), can be used to build a better understanding of a place. This dissertation uses a historical case because the historical is necessary to fully understand the contemporary. The revision of these sources is necessary to develop the kind of thought needed to develop effective policy and

²³⁸ Sloan and Gray, 7.

strategy — the sort of policy and strategy that allowed the Roman/Byzantine civilization to last over two millennia and contribute the many lessons and breakthroughs it did to humanity. Since its creation, “...geography has never been a simply contemplative, passive, or unengaged study.”²³⁹

Future Work

This dissertation opens two distinct paths that could, in turn, develop into a magnum opus requiring a dedicated lifetime of work. The first would develop the case study into something truly necessary to a developing, yet still overall lacking, field of Byzantine studies. This dissertation project alludes to the importance of religion in developing the geopolitical character of the Byzantine Empire. Incorporating myriad primary sources on Orthodox Christianity would introduce the crucially important element of religious geography to the Byzantine mind, to an even further degree than explored in this study. Doing so would further illuminate the geographic character of the Byzantine Empire but would also deviate from the original intent of this work as an “imperial geography,” with a focus on policy, economy, and strategy. Incorporating religious sources in addition to Byzantine literature, foreign accounts, and cultural history would yield an enormous document as of yet to be offered in the field of Byzantine studies — a work on the consuming religious geography of the Byzantine Empire. A second

²³⁹ Neil Smith and Anne Godlewska, “Critical Histories of Geography,” *Geography and Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 4.

and more likely possibility is to continue such an imperial and realist analysis of cases extending beyond the Byzantine Empire.

It would be my hope that this analysis of geography in its political and economic expressions may be extended to other powers in the region to facilitate a better geographic understanding of the Near East. In any case, this dissertation's methodology will certainly be further utilized in future government work in analyzing historical and contemporary regions of interest to United States policy, strategy, and operations.

Application to Modern Scholarship

Inherently, what makes a dissertation such as this one useful is not necessarily its findings on Byzantine imperial geography, although as a case study that certainly may contribute to its originality. Rather, the case presented could help unlock a broader geopolitical question on the longevity of the Byzantine Empire. Even pressing aside the Western Roman predecessor, the Byzantine Empire lasted nearly 1100 years counting from the movement of the capital by Constantine I of the Empire to Constantinople. While much of this success is attributable to the policy and strategy of the Empire, seminal geopolitical and geostrategic scholars' theories are useful. Through the lens of these scholars' arguments, the successes and failures of the Byzantine Empire may be modeled into a more contemporary discourse with up-to-the-minute advantages and lessons. Doing so potentially lends insight to contemporary policymakers and

strategists, let alone historians who would wish to document the ‘why’ of the Byzantine Empire’s longevity and collapse.

The writings of Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan on sea power and history are, arguably, obvious to the most rudimentarily economic mind of the Twenty-First Century. Yet, for its time, Mahan’s contention that a state’s influence is best measured and assessed according to the basis of its naval prowess — rather than the amount of land the state controls — is eminently controversial. Indeed, it took subsequent naval victories that effectively put entire empires into submission to afford real credibility to Admiral Mahan’s geostrategic scholarship, let alone “prove” his naval-centered historical analysis.²⁴⁰ In terms of territory, Mahan contended that the success of a state was fostered by the amount of coastline controlled. This accomplished two things — first, it accorded a quantifiable importance to the creation of ports that would facilitate trade and naval superiority. Second, indisputable control of the coast meant rival vessels, commercial and military, could not utilize a land base for refueling. Since Mahan believed that oceanic activity was what supported the authority of inland civilization, the quantity of coast controlled was just as important as the hubs of trade and naval activity themselves. To control the coasts, then, demanded the control of the seas and of inland territory, alike.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ Peter Paret, *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 452-456.

²⁴¹ Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History: 1660-1783* (New York: Dover, 1987), 42-43.



Figure 5.1: An interpretation of Mahan's strategy applied to Byzantine territory.²⁴²

Were Mahan's strategic models to be applied to the Byzantine Empire, his grand strategy would require a maximum degree of coastal command and control. While a throttling grip on the Mediterranean coastline was less than feasible, the Mahan model applied to the Ninth-Twelfth Centuries that are of particular interest to this dissertation would have no doubt called for a focus on lands, zones of constriction, and vantage points that afforded regional naval supremacy. Control of such lands, in the Mahan-based theory, would be a factor of the remarkable longevity of the Byzantine Empire. Fortunately, for its High

²⁴² Note: the following images all draw their base map courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. See: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/61/Mediterranean_Sea_16.61811E_38.99124N.jpg. All strategists' hypothetical territories are encircled in red.

Middle Ages history up until the Fourth Crusade, this model does not deviate far from the geographic reality of the Empire.

By the Mahan reckoning, however, the failures of the Byzantine rulers issued from an inability to secure and maintain all the coasts in question. Indeed, the Byzantine loss of its Italian toehold to the Normans allowed for increased autonomy and proliferation of Venice, which in turn resulted in the loss of control along Dalmatia. Loss of the Eastern Mediterranean archipelago (including Cyprus) to rebellion and the Fourth Crusaders meant the Byzantine rulers of these lands had passed the point of no return in their fall. Where Mahan's theory faltered, however, was in its lack of control of the Black Sea Coast. There, imperial colonies in Crimea remained loyal to the Empire up until its collapse in the Fifteenth Century. Moreover, Mahan's theory fails to account for the natural mountainous barriers along the Balkan and Anatolian coasts that served as a convenient geographic bulwark for Byzantine frontiers. Notwithstanding, Mahan's strategy reflected a historical reality of the territories the Byzantine emperors sought to reassert control.

Sir Halford Mackinder's theories were in direct contrast to the assertions of Admiral Mahan. Mackinder argued it was the control of inland resources critical to civilization development, including foodstuffs and strategic resources, which resulted in control of the world. The more insulated and guarded these territories were against foreign attack, the more absolute the control. Hence, Mackinder posited a world island theory, which argued that the innermost portion of

EurasiaAfrica would serve as the basis for world control, and in turn propagated what was referred to in the late Nineteenth Century as the Great Game, played out between the empires of Britain and Russia. Indeed, Mackinder illustrated his argument by pointing at the traditional Byzantine territory, although in a different time. He asserted that Greek naval superiority was directly fueled by the support of the Greek cities from the inland Balkan and Anatolian highland territories, which fed the naval-based empires throughout Greek Antiquity.²⁴³ To Mackinder, the more geographically insulated the resource-yielding lands, the better.

Mackinder spoke up for an insulated territory including the Balkans and Anatolian as something necessary for the Greek-speaking states to project their influence and authority outward by sea. For the Byzantine Empire, this would be expressed by facilitating focus not on the traditionally Hellenistic cultural centers, but by securing the natural insulation of the Balkans and arguably up to the Carpathians, to include all of the abundant resources yielded in such an expansion. Additionally, the Byzantine Anatolian frontiers toward the Caucasus would be secure to acquire more protected foodstuffs, luxury goods, and the minerals of such an expansion to the mountain ranges surrounding the Black Sea. The terrain would prove to be a natural defense.

²⁴³ Sir Halford Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction* (London: Constable and Company, 1919), 46-49.



Figure 5.2: An interpretation of Sir Halford's strategy applied to Byzantine territory.

Additionally, in keeping with an overarching theme of Mackinder's World Island, he would have no doubt advised an expansion upward into the fertile soils of the Ukraine to feed the Empire far more effectively, and arguably hold sway over other realms with such an abundant bread basket. While this latter assertion is quite hypothetical, it is perhaps no coincidence the Kievan Rus posed a formidable threat to the Byzantine Empire in the early stages of the period of interest to this dissertation. Moreover, Mackinder's theory shows merit when the beginning of the end for the Empire is heralded by Slavic invasions (and

subsequent permanent inhabitation) of the Balkans, as well as the devastating imperial loss at the Battle of Manzikert, from which Anatolia never fully recovered. Yet, Mackinder's theory fails to explain how the Empire managed centuries later holding onto little more than the coastal lands of the southern Balkans and western Anatolia.

General Karl Ernst Haushofer was profoundly influenced by the works of Sir Halford Mackinder. He argued for a singularly focused state in terms of its strategy. The simpler the focus, General Haushofer, asserted, the more effectively implemented it could be. It comes as no surprise, then, his system advocates three major tenets that proved an inspiring blueprint for the expansion of National Socialist Germany leading up to, and through, the Second World War.

First, Haushofer asserted a territory should be self-sufficient economically. Few, if any, resources could be imported into Haushofer's successful state. Close to Mackinder's theory, Haushofer asserted the most effective state encompassed a region with natural geographic boundaries that would be very difficult to penetrate, so long as it sustained the correct form of military protection. Tied to the idea of the pan-region was the focus of a strategy either by land or by sea, depending on which force was most effective at protecting a naturally bounded territory. However, Haushofer proposed that an effective military strategy could not utilize a balance of land and sea forces, as this caused a complication in

strategy and diluted otherwise concentrated distribution of strategic resources.²⁴⁴

An empire succeeded or failed, he would argue, based on its ability to concentrate resources toward a single effective monolithic goal.



Figure 5.3: An interpretation of Haushofer's strategy applied to Byzantine territory.

For Haushofer, the Byzantine Empire would have proved to be a strategic nightmare. Precisely because it straddled a water chokepoint, the Byzantine Empire required compromise: a balance of naval and land forces, albeit,

²⁴⁴ Johannes Mattern, *Geopolitik: Doctrine of Natural Self-Sufficiency and Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1942), 32-41.

perhaps, with a bias toward naval supremacy, given its maritime economic character. Additionally, the Byzantine Empire was neither based on a pan-region, nor was it entirely self-sufficient in the goods needed (although this was attempted with critical resources vis-à-vis central imperial economic control). Haushofer's strategy would then apply like Mackinder's to a single front extreme. The most likely choice of a pan-region would be Europe given Constantinople's situation on the European side of the Bosphorus, with natural geographic boundaries along the south Dalmatian Balkan Mountains and the Carpathians.

The Empire, radically reformed, could be protected by a land force guarding mountain passes and fortified in coastal garrisons along the imperial chokepoints. Haushofer's evident critique of the Byzantine Empire emerges in its final years — indeed, the Empire eventually collapsed to solely European holdings and was poorly guarded by an insufficient army and navy. However, his theory does not account for the extraordinary longevity of the Byzantine Empire, even amid its later strategic failures. Haushofer's Byzantine Empire would relinquish the economic character that fostered its growth and enabled the expansion upon which his model relies.

As discussed in Ch. 2, Nicholas Spykman's scholarship is most clearly a reaction to Sir Halford Mackinder and General Haushofer. It comes as no surprise, then, that Spykman became the American foil to Haushofer's German strategy. Spykman advocated a policy that is some veins similar to Admiral

Mahan's, but less focused on individual sea dominance. Rather, Spykman accepts some Mackinder tenets, and argues the world should be viewed as a singular sea and "world island," with the remaining territories outlying. Rather than dominance coming from control of the world island, Spykman sees dominance in ways similar to Mahan — control of specific chokepoints along the coast of inland territory is the key to geopolitical dominance. Yet, to Spykman, world dominance did not come in the form of direct control so much as by economic influence. It is through this geoeconomic doctrine Spykman's major deviation from Mahan is revealed: control does not come from the quantity of coastline controlled, but rather by establishing authority at critical points that could contain and restrict the economies of rivals: naval points, chokepoints, and perhaps most significantly, by control of the air. Being more a geographer in the spirit of Mackinder, Spykman contends geography must be used to protect these critical chokepoints, again pointing to the "quality" of the land controlled.²⁴⁵ This key control, he argued, facilitated successful overseas colonies, and, by extension, successful empires.

²⁴⁵ Nicholas J. Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2008), 450-457.



Figure 5.4: An interpretation of Spykman's strategy applied to Byzantine territory.

Spykman's Byzantine Empire would stay within the spirit of the geographic nature of the Empire on its Eurasian straddle and apply it to several critical naval chokepoints throughout the Mediterranean in order to establish naval supremacy. Through naval supremacy, the Byzantine Empire could control trade throughout the Eastern Mediterranean and poise itself to subdue rivals. Spykman's theory holds up precisely because the most successful periods in Byzantine history were those when Byzantium held control over the highlighted chokepoints, even though the Empire was more or less contiguous by land.

Indeed, the Spykman theory of containment by state and military authority seems to embody the whole of Byzantine geopolitics. If unspoken during the Byzantine era, it is geostrategically clear why Justinian I went out of his way to reconquer the highlighted Italian lands, in addition to the Western Mediterranean islands and the Straits of Gibraltar — Mediterranean economic dominance was at the forefront of the Byzantine mind. Where Spykman's theory fails is capturing the technological realities of a time ten centuries earlier.

While a collection of territories reflected Byzantine economic prosperity, the limitations of naval capabilities required the Byzantine Empire to establish a continuity across land to suture together all of these chokepoints. The Byzantine Empire, therefore, could not create overseas colonies and muster enough forces to garrison them from the chaos of the Middle Ages. Resources had to be spent to safely move land forces in defense if necessary. Isolated pockets of Byzantine rule eventually waned to land invaders. Despite these critiques, Spykman's theory demonstrates a formidable grasp of Byzantine geopolitics throughout the whole of its history.

Since all of these geographers attain a certain degree of merit in their explanation of the longevity and failure of the Byzantine Empire, the most effective geographic analysis of any state is rooted in examining a case from as many scholarly viewpoints as possible. In this regard, the Kissinger-esque, case-by-case, realist analysis of the Byzantine Empire as proposed by Edward Luttwak's strategic history proves to be highly effective. No map is included of

Luttwak's work simply because Luttwak's geostrategic model would not deviate from the historical one of the Byzantine. In a deterministic spirit, Luttwak contends Byzantine campaigns were placed on a geographic necessity. The success or failure of these campaigns had less to do with location and more to do with the political and strategic choices made within those campaigns and a failure to utilize the geography during the operations.²⁴⁶ In the same Kissinger-esque case-by-case spirit that inspires Luttwak, I contend this model, while formidable, does not fully explain the successes and failures of the Byzantine Empire. Policy and strategy are ongoing processes, even in hindsight, which must be continually presented with multiple models, theories, explanations to arrive at outcomes, even if those outcomes have already occurred. It is here where the most valuable lesson from the Byzantine Empire's longevity comes; this remarkable society, stretching back to the foundation of Rome, lent policymakers and strategists 2200 years of history to evaluate. From this standpoint, geographers should apply their models as well as others' on cases like the Byzantine Empire to improve their own contemporary decision-making process.

Therefore, while it may be doubtful that any single perfect answer will explain why the Byzantine Empire lasted as long as it did, the insights gained from this multifaceted approach seeking lessons in Byzantine imperial geography

²⁴⁶ Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 145-170.

can offer, I do believe, enduring and useful lessons of to historical- and contemporary geographers, alike.

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