

## THE GRAND STRATEGY OF THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE\*

Edward N. Luttwak

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For scholars and policy makers interested in military history and strategic studies, the Roman Empire with its glorious army and well-structured state apparatus has always been the center of attention. However, the Eastern Roman Empire, also known as the Byzantine Empire -despite having successfully survived for almost another millennium after the fall of Rome- has been mostly neglected by the same until recently.

Edward Luttwak himself tells the reader that when he first began to study the Byzantine strategy, his intention was to write a sequel to an earlier work of his on the Roman Empire;<sup>1</sup> but “[what] *ensued instead was the discovery of an altogether richer body of strategy than the earlier Romans had ever possessed, which called for a vastly greater effort of research and composition.*”<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it took the writer some two decades to finish his work on the Byzantine strategy, and the product can be said to have quite surpassed his previous book on the Roman Empire, both as to its volume and content.

Born in 1942, Edward Luttwak was raised in Italy and England. Having started his academic career in the UK, he moved to the US and became a professor at Georgetown University in 1975. Since then, he has been a guest lecturer in many universities, military academies and research centers around the world. Luttwak has also served as an

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\* For the Turkish translation, see: Edward N. Luttwak, *Bizans İmparatorluğu'nun Büyük Stratejisi*, çev. M. Efe Tuzcu, Epsilon Yayınevi, İstanbul, 2012.

<sup>1</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1976.

<sup>2</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Massachusetts/London, 2009, p. ix.

advisor to several US and other government offices in many countries, such as the US National Security Council, the White House Chief of Staff, the US Department of Defense, the US Department of State, US Army and the Fiscal and Monetary Institute of the Japanese Ministry of Finance. Since 2008, he has been working as Senior Associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.<sup>3</sup>

As a military historian and strategist, Luttwak is the author of many articles and books, including *Coup d'État: A Practical Handbook* (London, 1968, 1969), *A Dictionary of Modern War* (London, 1971), *The US – USSR Nuclear Weapons Balance* (Beverly Hills, 1974), *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century AD to the Third* (Baltimore, 1976), *The Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union* (London, 1983), *The Pentagon and the Art of War* (New York, 1984), *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1987), and *Turbo-Capitalism: Winners and Losers in the Global Economy* (New York, 1999).

Many of his works have elicited controversies among mainstream scholars, and Luttwak has been criticized by several historians for being an outsider who lacks the required expertise to make sound historical analyses. His previous book of 1976 “*on the strategy of Roman Empire up to the third century (...) continues to attract both inordinate praise and widespread criticism,*” as he himself puts it in the Preface to *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire*,<sup>4</sup> yet this more ambitious last work of his has been provoking even stronger reactions from both its admirers and critics.

It is worth noting at this point that Luttwak is not only an academic but also a freelance intelligence operative, “one who carries out field operations, extraditions, arrests, interrogations (never, he

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<sup>3</sup> For a professional profile, see: [http://www.idcitalia.com/downloads/bio/luttwak\\_edward.pdf](http://www.idcitalia.com/downloads/bio/luttwak_edward.pdf) (Access date: October 10, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Edward. N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Massachusetts/London, 2009, p. ix.

insists, using physical violence), military consulting and counterterrorism training for different agencies of the U.S., foreign governments and private interests.”<sup>5</sup> As will be seen, the strategy of the Byzantine Empire as outlined by the author was based on diplomacy and intelligence rather than military strength. Therefore, it may be argued that the field experience of Luttwak as an intelligence operative might have endowed him with a special kind of insight into this subject, with an edge over ordinary historians in understanding the intricacies of the Byzantine mind. Or, one might also suggest, out of *déformation professionnelle*, the author might have lost his touch with simple historical realities in a search for deeper explanations. It will be up to the reader to decide after examining the book and its criticisms, some of which will be touched upon below.

The main body of the book comprises a preface, fifteen chapters sorted under three parts and a conclusion as well as an appendix, a list of maps, and of names, a glossary of the terms used, and indices.

Part One of the book, *The Invention of Byzantine Strategy*, describes the geopolitical conjuncture that gave birth to a strategy, which was essentially different from that of the Roman Empire. The author starts by comparing the Byzantine Empire to the undivided Roman Empire and the Western Roman Empire. Lacking both the sheer military strength of the undivided empire, and the geostrategic advantages of the western empire, how did the Byzantines who had “*more powerful enemies and a less favorable geography*” survive for almost a millennium after the fall of Rome?<sup>6</sup> The answer is “[being] *able to adapt strategically to diminished circumstances by devising new ways of coping with old and new enemies,*” Luttwak argues.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Laura Rozen, “The Operator: The Double Life of a Military Strategist”, *The Jewish Daily Forward*, 2001, June 5, <http://forward.com/articles/13515/the-operator-the-double-life-of-a-military-strate-/> (Access date: October 10, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Edward. N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Massachusetts/London, 2009, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*

Then, he defines the very essence of that strategic adaptation: “[As] *compared to the united Romans of the past, the Byzantine empire relied less on military strength and more on all forms of persuasion- to recruit allies, dissuade enemies, and induce potential enemies to attack one another. Moreover, when they did fight, the Byzantines were less inclined to destroy enemies than to contain them, both to conserve their strength and because they knew that today’s enemy could be tomorrow’s ally.*”<sup>8</sup> This is the main axis of the whole work. In the subsequent chapters, Luttwak attempts to support this argument by presenting and interpreting the data he collected from various sources.

The author identifies the key elements that made the Byzantine survival possible by providing a power base to build the new strategy upon; these were the two Roman practices retained by the Byzantines: an effective system of tax collection and systematic military training.<sup>9</sup> These practices made a vital difference between the Byzantine Empire and its enemies, both by providing the empire with a steady flow of gold, and by making it possible to maintain a versatile and well-disciplined army. How the new strategy emerged upon these two pillars is explained by Luttwak in the two chapters of the first part.

The author gives special emphasis to the impact of Attila and the Huns as a crucial factor in the making of the Byzantine strategy; therefore, Chapter 1 is devoted to the Huns in its entirety. Drawing on ecclesiastical records of the period and assessments of the contemporary historian Ammianus Marcellinus, Luttwak argues that the Huns posed an existential threat to the empire -a threat which is analyzed in detail as to its tactical, operational, and theater strategic levels- and “*evoked a series of improvised reactions that soon combined into something much broader,*” i.e. the grand strategy of the

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 7-11.

Byzantine Empire.<sup>10</sup>

In the second chapter, the author discusses how the Byzantines managed to deflect the Hunnic threat. He contends that, had the empire resorted to large-scale military action against the Huns, the most probable outcome would have been a potentially fatal defeat. Instead, the Byzantines adopted a rather indirect approach, primarily relying on economic and diplomatic means. Meanwhile, the Byzantine army was being reshaped to meet the requirements of the evolving new strategy: cavalry tactics practiced by highly maneuverable mounted archers trained in line with the Hunnic example gradually became the focal point of Byzantine military manuals.

The Byzantines understood that their only key to success was a combination of a solid economy powered by an efficient tax system, a shrewd diplomacy based on intelligence -in both meanings of the word- and a well-trained, flexible army that is strong and swift enough to carry out limited, high-speed operations both to protect the empire against the countless waves of mounted archers from the steppe, and to take out strategic targets without having to engage in a full-scale war of attrition. Luttwak gives examples of how the Byzantines used their gold to persuade or manipulate their enemies and allies, how they employed diplomacy coupled with covert action to tip the scales against their attackers, and how they planned military moves based on speed and deception instead of raw power, as was the case with the Roman legions.

Finally, Luttwak focuses on the Justinian period (527-565) and demonstrates how the new military paradigm of stratagems and mounted archery enabled the Byzantines to win against the odds in several occasions. However, the empire was eventually struck by a major pandemic of bubonic plague in 541, the crisis-ridden aftermath of which could only be overcome by improving the Byzantine strategy yet further.

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 48.

Part Two of the book dwells on the many aspects of the Byzantine diplomacy. Chapter 3 examines the use of envoys that usually had to travel very long distances over high-risk geographies in order to reach allies, deter enemies, and collect intelligence. The empire did neither have a ministry of foreign affairs nor an intelligence agency in the modern sense, Luttwak states. Therefore, imperial envoys had to take multiple responsibilities and perform various functions simultaneously. The author clearly shows that an early form of what can be called “anthropological intelligence” in modern parlance, was being systematically carried out by the Byzantine envoys even in the sixth century, as can be seen in the detailed description of a shamanistic ritual observed by Zemarchos in a very distant land.<sup>11</sup>

Chapters 4 & 5 explain how the Byzantines used religion and imperial court ceremonies as political leverage. Constantinople was turned into a pilgrimage destination as a state policy. The goal was to capture the hearts and minds of the visitors by mesmerizing them with the mystic glamour of the city. As seen in the examples of the Kievan Rus’ and Bulgarians, Byzantines actively encouraged conversion to Orthodox Christianity, widening their sphere of influence thereby. As to the secular side of the Byzantine allure, Luttwak employs *De Cerimoniis Aulae Byzantinae*, or the *Book of Ceremonies* to demonstrate the imperial grasp of human psychology. The level of detail with which the court ceremonies were prepared and performed is quite telling. It appears that the Byzantine intention was to awe their visitors to cloud their judgment before sitting at the negotiating table.

In the next chapter, the author enumerates several examples of dynastic marriages between the Byzantines and other powers. The empire evidently used the bond of marriage in order to forge stronger alliances, and to reinforce the psychological barriers against their enemies. The marriage of the two illegitimate daughters of Michael VIII Palaiologos (1259-1282) to the great-grandsons of Cinggis Qan,

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p. 99.

Nogai and Abaqa Qans is a case in point: “*Michael VIII Palaiologos had certainly succeeded. Neither daughter was merely lost to the harems of busy warriors. Both delivered. At one point Nogai Qan provided four thousand horsemen to fight for Michael in Thessaly; more important, no power to the north could freely contemplate attacks on the emperor without fearing a visitation by Cinggisid outriders.*”<sup>12</sup>

In Chapter 7, the excerpts about a neighboring nation, the Pechenegs, quoted from *De Administrando Imperio* -a tenth-century manual of statecraft presumably written by the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (913-959)- clearly reveals the pragmatism of the Byzantine diplomacy: “*Of the Pechenegs, and how many advantages accrue from their being at peace with the emperor of Romans [i.e. Byzantines]*”, the writer goes on to explain why their hostility would be harmful to the empire, and enumerates the many uses of amicable relations with them, such as: “*So long as the emperor of the Romans is at peace with the Pechenegs, neither Russians nor Turks [= Magyars] can come upon the Roman dominions by force of arms, nor can they exact from the Romans large and inflated sums of money and goods as the price of peace.*”<sup>13</sup>

Chapters 8 & 9 discuss the Byzantine-Bulgarian and Byzantine-Muslim relations respectively. After recounting the Byzantine-Arab wars, Luttwak instructively discusses the strategic dimensions of the decisive Byzantine defeat of 1071 in Manzikert at the hands of the Seljuk Turks who took the leadership of Islam in the eleventh century. This defeat would prove to be a catastrophic blunder, which marked the beginning of the end for the Byzantines.

In Part Three of the book, the Byzantine art of war is scrutinized. Luttwak’s enthusiasm for military history and strategy is especially evident in this part, which is fairly abundant in details and

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 144.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 158-161.

quite impressive in its depth. Drawing on the military manuals used by the empire and deciphering the logic behind them, the author expounds how the military aspect of the grand strategy evolved throughout the centuries of the Byzantine history.

Chapter 10, The Classical Inheritance, goes through the Greek and Roman sources the Byzantines made use of, while developing their own military paradigm. Luttwak reviews several texts written before the Byzantines, to trace the origins of their military strategy based on speed and deception. Urging his readers to differentiate between “strategy” and “stratagem”, Sextus Julius Frontius, a Roman aristocrat who was referred to by the Byzantines, for instance, emphasized the value of wisdom and cunning in his *Strategemata*. A statement attributed to Julius Caesar and quoted by Frontius is a case in point: “[He] followed the same counsel towards the enemy as did many doctors when dealing with physical ailments, namely, that of conquering the foe by hunger (through sieges) rather than by steel.”<sup>14</sup>

Having surveyed several other pre-Byzantine examples, the author now turns to the “*infinitely superior Strategikon attributed to the emperor Maurikios (ca. 582-602)* [which] remained largely unknown until recent times,” and discusses it at length in Chapter 11.<sup>15</sup> Considering its methodology and exhaustive content -in spite of its concision- this masterpiece of military literature appears to have had constituted the theoretical backbone of the Byzantine warfare. In a wide range of topics starting from the training of the individual soldier, it gives detailed instructions on the formation and maintenance of the army that was required by the empire to implement the new strategy.

The main themes of the manual are all based on a basic principle: avoidance of attrition by means of stratagems and *relational* maneuver. The principle of avoiding attrition is clearly reflected in the

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 240-241.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 266.

following maxims: “*When a populous city is taken, it is important to leave the gates open, so that the inhabitants may escape and not be driven to utter desperation. The same holds when an enemy’s fortified camp is taken,*” and “[when] *an enemy is surrounded, it is well to leave a gap in our lines to give them an opportunity to flee.*”<sup>16</sup> As some readers might have noticed, these statements are strongly reminiscent of the old Chinese adage, “in order to capture, one must let loose.”

The following quotation selected by the author effectively summarizes the essence of stratagems: “*It is very important to spread rumors among the enemy that you are planning one thing; then go and do something else.*”<sup>17</sup>

The other pillar of the Byzantine military paradigm, relational maneuver, means “*tactics and operational schemes specifically designed to circumvent the peculiar strengths of a given enemy and to exploit his peculiar weaknesses.*”<sup>18</sup> In other words, except for the basic principles, there are no universal guidelines to follow against all enemies; instead, all operations must be tailored for each and every encounter.

Since it is so vital to know about the enemy, Book XI of the *Strategikon* is entirely devoted to the military mentality of various nations. Technical details regarding enemy weapons, tactics, and battlefield habits aside, its content also includes psychological and sociological evaluations of the nations examined.

Indeed, with its recommendations on subversive activities the *Strategikon* also establishes the foundations of the Byzantine psychological warfare. Two statements quoted by Luttwak are especially remarkable: “*When a delegation comes from the enemy, inquire about the leaders of the group, and on their arrival treat*

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 286.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*

*them very friendly [sic], so their own people will come to suspect them. (...) A way of arousing discord and suspicion among the enemy is to refrain from burning or plundering the estates of certain prominent men on their side and of them alone.”<sup>19</sup>*

Including all the essentials for what would become the hallmarks of the Byzantine strategy; the *Strategikon* can be taken as the intellectual core of the decisive transformation from the Roman Empire to the Byzantine Empire.

In Chapter 12, Luttwak examines “**the second great age of Byzantine military literature (...) starting with the works attributed to Leo VI ‘The Wise’ (886-912).**”<sup>20</sup> Building on the framework provided by the *Strategikon* of Maurikios, other Byzantine writers came up with their own improvements in all levels of warfare. Among the many details concerning the operational and tactical aspects of war, once more, the reader will notice that the psychology of war was taken very seriously by the Byzantines, as can be understood from the assessment of the Islamic ideology as regards its military impacts, or the quoted hortatory speeches given to the imperial soldiers. Treatises concerning more technical issues such as siege craft and measurement are also discussed by Luttwak.

In Chapter 13, the author focuses exclusively on naval warfare. Mostly referring to Leo VI again, Luttwak first makes sure that the reader gets the facts straight on the technical realities of the time. After demystifying the legendary ‘Greek fire’ as to its chemical and physical properties, he discusses the practical limits to its use. Before its secret was out to be successfully imitated by the enemies of the empire -which did not take longer than a couple of centuries- it appears that the ‘Greek fire’ was used by the Byzantines mainly for its psychological, rather than physical impacts. Even the sight of the seas aflame would certainly have traumatizing religious connotations for a

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 305.

Muslim Arab.

Then, the author describes the *dromon*, a fast and maneuverable ship whose many versions constituted the main body of the Byzantine navy for centuries. Next come the tactics and stratagems as outlined by Leo VI, such as the crescent moon formation which is recommended as an extraordinarily effective way to encircle the enemies, and methods of provocation to break enemy formations.

The common denominator of all the maritime advice is “*that in normal conditions the commander should not engage in battle-the usual Byzantine advice, given the impossibility of truly decisive battles.*”<sup>21</sup> Thanks to this wise counsel, although its strength waxed and waned throughout the centuries, the tactically superior Byzantine navy “*always remained powerful enough when it was most needed.*”<sup>22</sup>

Chapter 14 takes a closer look at the tenth century Byzantine military renaissance. After remaining on the defensive for centuries, the empire finally went on the offensive as of the middle of the tenth century. Nikephoros II Phokas (969-976) appears to be a mastermind of this strategic shift.

*De Velitatione* (Skirmishing) attributed to Phokas is about the border defense techniques developed against the Muslim Arabs. As Luttwak puts it, “[in] **De Velitatione, the aim is to do much with little, with raids by relatively small forces that magnify their strength by achieving surprise-that is, the temporary nonreaction of the unprepared enemy.**”<sup>23</sup> Surprise could only be achieved by good intelligence, high speed, and effective positioning. *De Velitatione* gives detailed instructions on how to attain and maintain these three elements.

An especially noteworthy concept in this manual is called *elastic* defense. The rather static ways of classic border defense were

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. 331.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p. 336.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p. 340.

considered to be too costly and strategically disadvantageous because the whole initiative was given to the aggressors. Therefore, as an alternative strategy, which is perfectly in line with the general Byzantine principle of avoiding attrition, the manual suggests not confronting the attackers while they are on the offensive; instead, the enemy should be counterattacked on their way back home, when they are weary and burdened with their spoils.

At first glance, the costs of exposing the imperial territory to raids and looting that go unchecked might seem too high; but by non-military measures such as relocating the towns and villages to unreachable sites, designing their architecture in order to make it harder for the mounted raiders to move around in them freely, and so on, the costs could be minimized to tolerable levels. On the other hand, the advantages of the *elastic* defense were numerous: First of all, predicting the enemy's routes of return would be much easier than trying to determine where and when they would attack. Secondly, summoning and deploying rapid response units would be more effective and less costly than the upkeep of permanent units to protect the border. Finally, the enemies would think that it is not worth all the effort to raid Byzantine settlements if it is not possible to return home safely with the spoils. Undeniably, this is a striking example illustrating the capabilities of the Byzantine strategic genius.

Luttwak then goes through other works written in the same period, which include detailed strategic, operational and tactical instructions on both offensive and defensive warfare, and are full of clever recommendations on military and non-military ways to outsmart the enemy even in the worst-case scenarios.

The last chapter of the book is dedicated to an illustrative example of the Byzantine grand strategy at work: Herakleios' defeat of Persia, the "*deepest and boldest theater-level maneuver in the whole of Byzantine history (...) launched in desperate circumstances to*

*rescue the empire from imminent destruction.*<sup>24</sup> Luttwak demonstrates how the Byzantines utilized a well-balanced combination of effective intelligence, shrewd diplomacy, psychological warfare, and *relational* maneuver to turn the tables on Sassanians and Avars.

In the conclusion, Luttwak summarizes the grand strategy of the empire, and attempts to deduce a Byzantine “operational code” from the elements of continuity he traced throughout the Byzantine history. As a blend of Chalcedonian Christianity, Hellenic culture, and Roman political spirit, the imperial identity provided the framework for a Byzantine *modus operandi*, which can be summarized by the following principles: try to avoid war at all times, yet always be fully prepared for it; collect reliable intelligence in every way possible and use it as the basis for all action, be it diplomatic or military; if war is inevitable, avoid attrition through stratagems and relational maneuver; and do not destroy the enemy but try to contain it as a pawn to be used against other enemies.

Since its publication in 2009, the book has been drawing both praise and criticism. It is worth noting that most of the positive feedback has been coming from laymen, whereas Luttwak’s harshest critics have usually been the mainstream Byzantinists. The most significant point put forward by the critics is that Luttwak’s historical knowledge is seriously inadequate, which makes him base his arguments on misinterpreted data, misrepresent the subjects covered, and quickly jump to conclusions on still controversial matters.

Anthony Kaldellis, for instance, argues that several of Luttwak’s primary postulates are historically inaccurate, such as the great influence of the Huns on the evolution of the Byzantine strategy, or that the Byzantine army became, gradually but surely, mounted-archer-oriented.<sup>25</sup> Kaldellis also states that there were actually many

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p. 393.

<sup>25</sup> Anthony Kaldellis, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 2010.01.49, <http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2010/2010-01-49.html> (Access date: October 29, 2012).

Byzantine leaders besides the two mentioned by the author, Justinian and Basileios II, who preferred war over diplomacy, which means that “the operational code” as defined by Luttwak was not as widely accepted by the Byzantines as is claimed.

Another critic, on the other hand, suggests that even if Luttwak is right about the existence of a definable Byzantine grand strategy, it was in fact not exclusively Byzantine at all: “*The Sasanian Empire, the Umayyad caliphate of Damascus, the Abbasid caliphate of Baghdad, and the Merovingian and Carolingian kings of the Franks also understood the value of gold, diplomacy, and sound intelligence. The new strategy was not Byzantine, but Early Medieval. Luttwak explains why the Byzantine Empire survived the Roman Empire in Western Europe, but does not explain why it also survived the Sasanians, Umayyads, Abbasids, Merovingians, and Carolingians.*”<sup>26</sup>

One of the strongest criticisms comes from Warren Treadgold. He agrees with Luttwak on the main argument that the general Byzantine attitude towards war was to avoid it as much as possible, yet Treadgold offers a very different explanation as to its plausible causes, which are mostly overlooked by Luttwak: “*the third-century invasions, the failure of Julian's Persian expedition in 363, the empire's defeat at Adrianople in 378, and above all the Byzantines' acceptance of Orthodox Christianity, with its extremely negative view of warfare.*”<sup>27</sup> Next, Treadgold goes into details and refutes many of Luttwak's statements about the facts and figures of the Byzantine army, the imperial tax system, state policies towards pagans and Monophysites, etc.

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<sup>26</sup> Jona Lendering and Bill Thayer, *Book Reviews*, <http://rambambashi.wordpress.com/2010/05/11/luttwak-grand-strategy-of-the-byzantine-empire/> (Access date: October 29, 2012).

<sup>27</sup> Warren Treadgold, *The Medieval Review*, 10.06.22, <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2022/8950/10.06.22.html?sequence=1> (Access date: October 29, 2012).

As to the narrative aspects of the book, some critics note that Luttwak occasionally gets lost in a hodge-podge of irrelevant details and fails to build a coherent argument based on the data he presents, while some others praise him of being “*especially good on fine detail*”.<sup>28</sup> Secondly, Luttwak’s non-scholarly choice of words, at times, has been found disturbing by some reviewers: “*The exposition is punctuated by weird statements and outdated notions.*”<sup>29</sup> Thirdly, the book is riddled with “*misprints, misspellings of medieval and modern names, and miscellaneous mistakes*” as one-commentator points out.<sup>30</sup> Most of these mistakes may not be damaging to Luttwak’s main arguments, yet it is a fact that they make the book harder to read.

In spite of its aforementioned shortcomings, though, the book is still a valuable work, which contains timeless information regarding military and non-military aspects of establishing a grand strategy. Indeed, Ishmael Jones, a former Marine officer and a former deep cover CIA officer illustratively draws parallels between the Byzantine situation as described by Luttwak, and the challenges the US is facing today.<sup>31</sup> He maintains that there is much to learn from the Byzantine ways of problem solving when it comes to national security.

Luttwak is certainly not a Byzantinist; therefore, he may well be wrong in several of his historical assertions. Nonetheless, as an experienced military strategist and freelance intelligence operative,

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<sup>28</sup> Kaldellis, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 2010.01.49; Richard Tada, “The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire – Book Review”, *ArmchairGeneral*, <http://www.armchairgeneral.com/the-grand-strategy-of-the-byzantine-empire-book-review.htm> (Access date: October 29, 2012); Eric Ormsby, “Words And Swords”, *Wall Street Journal*, November 27, 2009, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703932904574510561662553166.html#articleTabs=article> (Access date: October 29, 2012).

<sup>29</sup> Kaldellis, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 2010.01.49.

<sup>30</sup> Treadgold, *The Medieval Review*, 10.06.22.

<sup>31</sup> Ishmael Jones, “What the Byzantines Can Teach Us about Our National Security”, *American Thinker*, September 04, 2012, [http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/03/what\\_the\\_byzantines\\_can\\_teach.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/03/what_the_byzantines_can_teach.html) (Access date: October 30, 2012).

whatever he has to say about a grand strategy founded upon a delicate balance between intelligence, diplomacy, stratagems, and relational maneuver, may as well have implications that are especially relevant in today's global state of affairs, where wars of attrition become ever more costly.

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