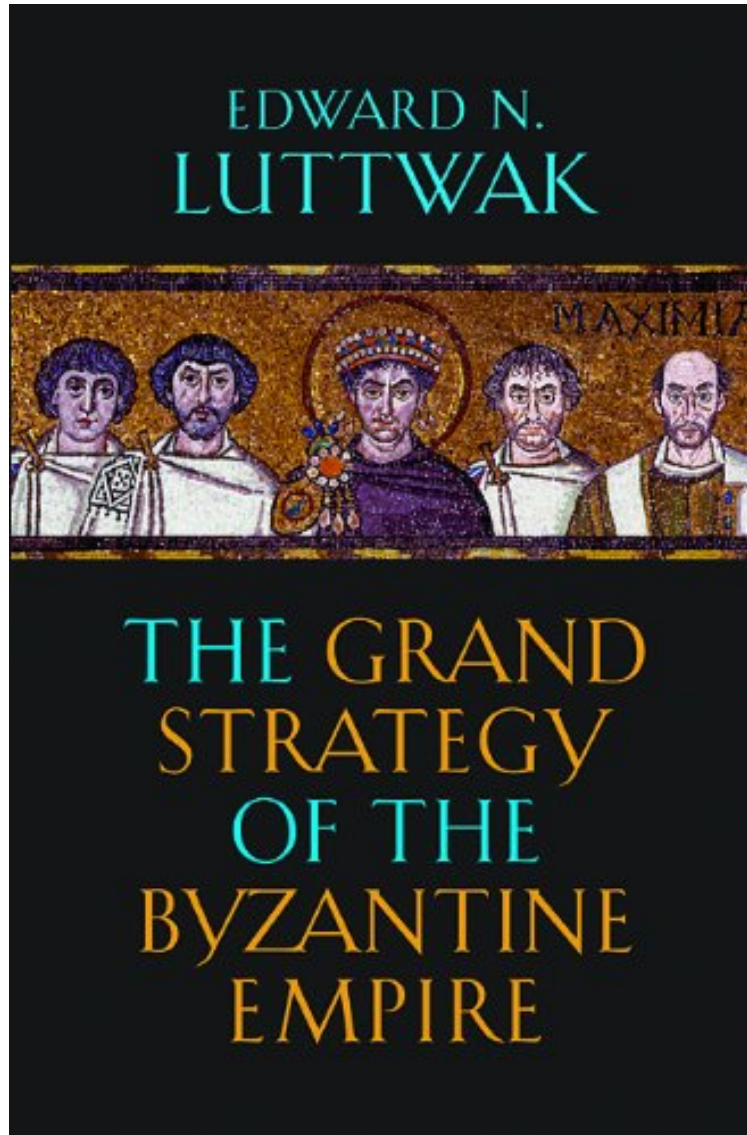


[Ebook free] The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire

## The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire

*Edward N. Luttwak*

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**Edward N. Luttwak : The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire:

20 of 20 people found the following review helpful. Byzantine in Every WayBy Retired ReaderEdward Luttwak has devoted much of his career to the analysis of the concepts of strategy especially what is called `grand strategy'. In this book he has attempted to distill the basics of the grand strategy used by the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire to out last the Western Roman Empire by almost 1000 years. Since grand strategy is a modern concept, Luttwak had to

analyze the history of the Byzantine Empire and infer the strategic designs that it followed from relevant historical evidence, including events, fragmentary comments, and official writings. All in all, he has done a pretty good job of it. Constantinople (Istanbul) was at the center of Byzantine strategy since for much of its history it was the most prosperous and populous city in Western Christendom. Its unique location made it highly defensible and indeed until it was successfully captured in the Fourth Crusade (1204) it was the anchor of the Empire. The Byzantines used the magnificence and wealth of the city as well as the carefully staged extreme opulence and ritual of the imperial court to overawe enemies and allies alike. Operating from this nearly impregnable bastion, successive Emperors and their bureaucracies were able to employ a complex mixture of intelligence information, bribery, diplomatic maneuvering including duplicity, and military force to thwart all imperial enemies even in the face of much stronger military forces. Perhaps their greatest enemy was the high cost of their strategy for in spite of a very effective system of taxes Byzantium was very near to bankruptcy several times in its history. Since the very survival of the Empire was at stake, the Byzantines studied and analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of their potential enemies in a very modern and effective manner. Their military forces evolved over the years, but until the last 200 years before the destruction of the empire, always included a strong navy and an army consisting of a core of well trained native troops supplemented by large contingents of mercenaries. After the Emperor Justinian (c. 6th Century) the empire was largely on the defensive. As Luttwak explains in considerable detail the Byzantines developed a strategy that enabled them to defend and maintain the empire against a variety of enemies bent on its destruction. This is an interesting and well researched book. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Entertaining, Readable, but read with care. By Calvin Liu. Much of the kudos and complaints from previous reviews, I agree with. I just wanted to add that the writer clearly was coming from a US military mindset, and his writing contained a number of obvious examples of this. For example: what place does a leader of the Russian Orthodox church being in the KGB have in a book about Byzantine military strategy? Especially as this book was written well after the fall of the Soviet Union? For that matter, where is the equal mention of the Catholic Church and its making so many CIA members Knights of Malta? Malta is at least the same geographical area as the Byzantines once held sway over. I'd also like to add some clarity on the previous comments on the relative scholarship and intended audience of this book. When dealing with ancient documents (and thus ancient languages), the outcome of translations is subject to large degrees of interpretation. As such it is normally common practice to refer to the original text so that either common ground or sources of disparity can be easily seen. In nearly every case in this book, the translations are assumed to be unitary and consistent when even in the book there are notes that this is not a safe presumption. I also agree that this book is a thinly veiled means to criticize extant US national security policy. I do note a number of positives: there is a much more nuanced overview of Islam as well as early Christian history (Monophysites/Council of Chalcedon) than is commonly seen, though the former is diluted by what appears to be a blurring at times between modern and proto-Islam. The book also does a fair job of distinguishing the actual makeup of historical "Huns" and what not vs. what the likely actual composition was. A last note is that there is the merest beginnings of a look at the economic underpinning behind military strategy - unfortunately this is largely ignored outside of where a couple of points are intended to be made (i.e. heavy taxation + religious oppression = Egypt and Syria going Muslim rapidly). What numbers are presented are not very useful due to a complete lack of context - what use is knowing how much tax in gold was owed if there is no idea on the average income in gold? All in all, the book was clearly written for armchair military strategists and intelligence operatives with a side bar of US military fans, despite its many criticisms of ancient works by armchair military strategists. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Byzantine History from a Military Perspective. By Jack M. Lloyd, Jr. A much-delayed follow-on to this author's "Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire"; this material is much more difficult, not only because of the relative paucity of records, but also because the underlying subject is much more subtle than for the Roman Empire. The author is a world-noted expert in the subject of strategy, and brings his expertise fully to bear on this singularly obscure subject. Since very few academic historians have any background in strategy, it deserves a much wider audience than it is likely to receive. This clarifies much of the "Why" and "How" of Byzantine history which is either misunderstood or misrepresented in most Byzantine histories. Highly recommended, even though the author's text is sometimes very dense.

In this book, the distinguished writer Edward Luttwak presents the grand strategy of the eastern Roman empire we know as Byzantine, which lasted more than twice as long as the more familiar western Roman empire, eight hundred years by the shortest definition. This extraordinary endurance is all the more remarkable because the Byzantine empire was favored neither by geography nor by military preponderance. Yet it was the western empire that dissolved during the fifth century. The Byzantine empire so greatly outlasted its western counterpart because its rulers were able to adapt strategically to diminished circumstances, by devising new ways of coping with successive enemies. It relied less on military strength and more on persuasion?to recruit allies, dissuade threatening neighbors, and manipulate potential enemies into attacking one another instead. Even when the Byzantines fought?which they often did with great skill?they were less inclined to destroy their enemies than to contain them, for they were aware that today's enemies could be tomorrow's allies. Born in the fifth century when the formidable threat of Attila's Huns were

deflected with a minimum of force, Byzantine strategy continued to be refined over the centuries, incidentally leaving for us several fascinating guidebooks to statecraft and war. The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire is a broad, interpretive account of Byzantine strategy, intelligence, and diplomacy over the course of eight centuries that will appeal to scholars, classicists, military history buffs, and professional soldiers.

The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire is written with a profound knowledge of the field, a thorough mastery of the sources and secondary literature, and a lively and engaging style that both specialists and general readers will appreciate. (Peter B. Golden, Rutgers University) Edward Luttwak makes a persuasive, well-documented argument that the Byzantines--given the continuity of their institutions, their sense of a historical mission, and their own manuals on statecraft and warfare--had a coherent strategy that enabled them to preserve an empire shielded by few geographical barriers and surrounded by a host of hostile neighbors. (Eric McGeer, author of *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth: Byzantine Warfare in the Tenth Century*) One of America's leading strategic minds...The traditional stereotype of the Byzantine Empire, established by Edward Gibbon in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, has undergone considerable revision of late, thanks to a renaissance of Byzantine studies, to which Edward Luttwak has now made an important contribution. Luttwak had long promised a sequel to *Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* covering the Roman Empire in the East from the fourth through the fifteenth centuries, and finally it is here. (Stuart Koehl *Weekly Standard* 2009-10-28) This book is good history as well as being an insightful commentary on strategy...American soldiers and diplomats who helped turn enemies into allies in creating the Sunni Awakening in Iraq will recognize and empathize with what the Eastern Romans did for centuries. This is a timely and relevant work...Luttwak does an excellent job of describing the intelligence system of the Eastern empire, from its tactical use of scouting and patrolling to its strategic use of spies and double agents in the courts of its enemies...Luttwak does a great service in giving us a readable account of how the Byzantines managed national-security strategy in a way that should be useful to contemporary soldiers and civilian policymakers. It is also a very good read. (Gary Anderson *Washington Times* 2009-10-28) Luttwak tells his story well. He is especially good on fine detail. Whether describing the lethal "composite reflex bow" used by Hun archers or the complex but surprisingly efficient Byzantine tax system, he is both vivid and exact...Though no Hun bows survive, Luttwak's meticulous descriptions convey their deadly efficiency. It is through such details that a modern reader captures some sense of the sheer terror that those ancient raiders inspired. Even on obscure theological matters, such as the wrangles over "monotheletism"--the proposition that Christ had two natures, human and divine, united by a single will--he is refreshingly lucid...Notwithstanding its erudition, this is an impassioned book, and all the better for that...Historically remote as they are, the Byzantines may have something to teach Americans about long-term survival. (Eric Ormsby *Wall Street Journal* 2009-11-22) If there's a single overriding lesson for Americans from Byzantium in Luttwak's fine and definitive work, it is that we ought to make use of Byzantine methods so that we may never be in Byzantine straits. (Joshua Trevino *New Ledger* 2009-12-20) Nothing Luttwak writes is uninteresting...His ventures into the military history of antiquity and the Middle Ages are unlike the work of academic historians and equally unlike the superficial surveys produced by journalists for the general public. Thanks to his polyglot reading, his many scholarly contacts and his opinionated style, he succeeds wondrously in reaching both specialists and the public...If the practicality of what he suggests is less than obvious in any given contemporary crisis, the historical analysis which has brought him to his conclusions is exciting, challenging and erudite. It is rare and refreshing to find such deep research on a great empire of the past deployed so eloquently for the guidance of the beleaguered governments of the present. (Glen Bowersock *London of Books* 2010-02-11) When students of grand strategy search the past for lessons, rarely do they look to the Byzantine Empire. Luttwak, who wrote a well-regarded history of the grand strategy of ancient Rome, thinks this is a mistake. In this exhaustive study, he shows how the rulers of the eastern half of the late Roman Empire were the true masters of the craft. Although the Byzantine Empire occupied a more vulnerable geographic position than its western counterpart, it lasted almost 1,000 years longer. Luttwak argues that the Byzantines survived by relying less on brute military power and more on allies, diplomacy, and the containment of their enemies. They were able, he claims, "to generate disproportionate power from whatever military strength could be mustered, by combining it with the art of persuasion, guided by superior information." The book makes this argument through fascinating chapters on religion and statecraft, envoys, dynastic marriages, and the Byzantine art of war, as well as through evocative details about weapons, military tactics, and taxes. Although the Byzantine Empire did not have a foreign minister, intelligence agencies, or theories of "smart power," it certainly acted as if it did. (G. John Ikenberry *Foreign Affairs* 2010-03-01) The volume's grand sweep is appealing. It unpicks the hard-nosed considerations underpinning the Byzantine complexities of the strategies that permitted the eastern Empire to outlast its western counterpart by almost a millennium, introducing key diplomatic factors such as Christianity, prestige and marriage, surveying the tradition of Byzantine military analysis, and highlighting the issues at the heart of Byzantine survival. (Michael Whitby *Times Literary Supplement* 2010-03-12) About the Author Edward N. Luttwak serves or has served as a contractor for the Office of Net Assessment of the U.S. Department of Defense and for the U.S. armed forces, and as a consultant to the U.S. National Security Council,

the White House Chief of Staff, and several allied governments.