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**DEFENSIVE DIPLOMACY: THE CASE OF BYZANTINE DIPLOMACY  
AND THE US**

**MASTER'S THESIS**

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(v., pavardė)

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.....

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(Gynimo komisijos sekretoriaus/ės parašas)

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Šiame darbe nagrinėjamos Bizantijos diplomatinės praktikos ir formos ir jų įtaką galios kitimuose. Teorinėje dalyje aprašoma diplomatinės sąvoka, diplomatinės praktikų ir formų tyrimo prasmingumas, klasikinio realizmo teorija, offshore balancing teorija ir nuosmukio teorija. Empirinėje dalyje pateikiama trumpa Bizantijos, Prancūzijos ir JAV diplomatinės praktikų istorija ir apžvalga. Tyrimu siekiama išsiaiškinti kaip šalių galios svyravimai, šiuo atveju nuosmukis, yra perteikiamas diplomatinės praktikose ir diplomatinės formose. Analizuojamas visas šalių diplomatinės istorijos kontekstas.

## Contents

Introduction .....	1
Theoretical background .....	5
The fall of Byzantium.....	9
Historical overview of Byzantine diplomatic practice .....	15
The ‘grand’ masking of the downfall of the Byzantine Empire .....	27
The French diplomatic practice .....	32
Explaining the decline .....	38
Diplomatic practice history of The United States of America .....	42
Diplomatic practice of the US .....	46
Comparison of diplomatic practices .....	52
Conclusions .....	58
Bibliography .....	60
Summary.....	65
Santrauka .....	67

## Introduction

Since the conclusion of the cold war, the future of the world has been abundantly speculated about. The new challenges, which arose after the cold war and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, make the speculations ever so difficult. The impact of globalization, the rising (and subsequent fall) of international terrorism, economic uncertainty and the changing climate are but of few challenges the world faces today. How the world will rise to tackle these challenges – unified or divided – remains to be seen, however a substantial role falls on the United States of America.

As the clear victor of the cold war the US is seen by many as the leading power in the contemporary world and therefore should champion the cause to meet these challenges head on. With its great military presence throughout the globe, strength of its economy, radiant norms of cooperation and unity and international prestige the US should be leading the charge to tackle these issues. On the other hand, we have seen another country walk a similar path long ago. It also possessed a flourishing economy, radiant norms and exquisite prestige enjoyed internationally. Labelled as the underdog of its twin sister, the Western Roman Empire, the Eastern Roman Empire otherwise known as Byzantium, for the majority of its history was surrounded by countries with which it was not always on the best of terms. In spite of the Byzantine Empire, through cunning and deception, managed to out manoeuvre its adversaries and remain a strong power in the south-eastern Europe for more than millennia.

An unlikely parallel can be drawn between these two countries. The Byzantine Empire has never enjoyed the same military capabilities of the Western Roman Empire and not even coming close to contemporary US, and it therefore resorted to a defensive stance in regards to its diplomacy in attempt to defend its interests and territory. The US, on the other hand, as it would seem, has not taken such an approach towards the international system, however, a continuously growing amount of scholars and academics have started to advocate for a more restrained – defensive foreign policy.

One needs only to look at Byzantium's history to understand that it was a failing power and the choice of defensive diplomacy was a rational one to make. The defensive policy in the United States case does not seem completely logical, since it emerged as the victor of the cold war, and is the leading power in the world. Or is it? A substantial amount of literature has been written on the continuing downfall of the US. The Declinist theory on the decline of the US has been developed and became a recurring topic in the US since the 1950s. Therefore the call for a more defensive foreign policy does possess some credibility.

In this paper I argue that both the Byzantine Empire and the United States of America are falling powers. The former was falling from its conception, the later – after reaching its power peak. Their falling status is not signalled through economic downfall or political turmoil, but is subtly hidden in its diplomatic practices. Therefore I aim to uncover the answer to the question: **Can the declining US positions be explained through its diplomatic formats when comparing them to the Byzantine ones?**

To uncover the answer to the proposed question, we can follow the algorithm: **1) To establish a theoretical background for the thesis; 2) To briefly over view the history of the Byzantine Empire; 3) To show the diplomatic practices of Byzantium; 4) To explain how the fall of the Byzantine Empire was masked by their diplomatic practices; 5) To rethink the “declining/defensive diplomacy of France; 6) To explain declinism and its relation to the United States of America; 7) To examine the history of diplomatic practices of the US; 8) To show how the signs of decline were masked by the United States; 9) To make a comparison of both Byzantine and US diplomatic formats.** For the time being we can employ a broad understanding of diplomacy as - defined by Oxford dictionary – the profession, activity or skill of managing international relations, often by a countries representative abroad and in a tactful way of dealing with people. The concept of Grand strategy, developed by Edward N. Luttwak, can be a basis of understanding and a framework for analyzing diplomacy together with foreign policy

For a comprehensive analysis of the Byzantine history, we can turn to John Sheppard’s and Simon Franklin’s book titled ‘Byzantine Diplomacy’<sup>1</sup> which offers both great diplomatic insight in to the given subject, and also provides and categorises information in historical periods which will help when portraying the fall of the Byzantine Empire. Moreover ‘Byzantine Diplomacy’ shows the specific ways the Byzantines conducted diplomacy, from lavish feasts to unexplainable grandeur. Moreover parts of the book, namely ‘Section IV’ and ‘Section VI’ deal with, what could be labelled as a grand strategy. It both shows how diplomacy was done, but also, how and why in a specific matter it was carried out. This reasoning is essential for us, since it allows comparing the contemporary reasoning of the US with the reasoning of the Byzantines (especially useful when compared to the proposed restrained approach in the US).

Edward N. Luttwak’s book ‘The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire’<sup>2</sup> will accomplish 2 key things for the thesis: 1) It provides detailed information on the history of the Byzantine Empire, with detailed descriptions of politics and warfare and; 2) Adds upon Sheppard’s

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Shepard, Simon Franklin, „Byzantine Diplomacy“. Hampshire: VARIORUM, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, „The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire“. London: The Belknap Press of harvard University Press, 2009.

work, when illustrating how the Byzantines viewed the world (the grand strategy). The author, in his book, shows how the Byzantines developed and changed their diplomatic practices when dealing with their neighbours, their neighbour's enemies and so on. Furthermore a portion of the book is dedicated to the warfare of the Byzantium, namely its strategies both on ground and at sea. One thing of note, which immediately strikes the reader, that during war, Byzantines did not actively seek the obliteration of the enemies forces, since the present day enemy, can be a friend come tomorrow. We can instantly draw parallels to this view and the role of US both in Afghanistan and Iraq wars and the build up to them.

Both authors also draw information from a phenomenal monograph written by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine the 7<sup>th</sup> titled "De Administrando Imperio".<sup>3</sup> The monograph was intended as a guide for his son and successor on how to continue ruling the Empire. The monograph details how foreign policy and diplomacy should be conducted with the neighbouring states and the perils of it; what can be learned from his experience in regards to foreign policy; a summary of surrounding states' history and their geographical significances as well as a short history of the Byzantine Empire itself. The monograph provides a detail guide for us on the diplomatic dealings of Byzantium with other states as well as ways of conducting diplomacy. Furthermore, as a primary source, it allows us to grasp the reasoning of the Byzantines themselves, both Constantine the 7<sup>th</sup> and the rulers before him.

John Haldon's book on "Warfare, state and society in Byzantine world 565 – 1204"<sup>4</sup> shows the warfare aspect of the Byzantine history. It details how the Byzantines prepared for war, how it was conducted and what impact on the Byzantine society it had.

Numerous other authors have also written articles which provide insight how diplomacy was carried out. A doctor's thesis on the diplomatic communication between the west and the Byzantine Empire by Stavroula Andriopoulou shows Byzantine relations and means of conducting diplomacy with the west.<sup>5</sup> Anthony Cutler's article on the gifting patters of Byzantium and early Islamic states<sup>6</sup> and John Meyendorff's article on "Byzantine views on Islam"<sup>7</sup> show the diplomatic dealings between Byzantium and Islamic states. Dimitri Obolensky's article on the ecclesial relations between the Byzantine Empire, Kiev and Moscow,<sup>8</sup> coupled with Egon Wellesz article on

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<sup>3</sup> R. J. H. Jenkins, "Constantine Porphyrogenitus De Administrando Imperio". Washington, 1967.

<sup>4</sup> John Haldon, „Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World 564-1204“. London: UCL, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Stavroula Andriopoulou, "Diplomatic Communication between Byzantium and the West under the late Palailogi (1354 – 1453)". Doctor thesis, The University of Birmingham, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Anthony Cutler, "Significant gifts: Patterns of exchange in Late Antique, Byzantine, and Early Islamic diplomacy", "Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies", 38(1), 2008.

<sup>7</sup> John Meyendorff, "Byzantine views on Islam". "Dumbarton Oaks Papers", 18, 1964, 113 – 132.

<sup>8</sup> Dimitri Obolensky, "Byzantium, Kiev and Moscow: A study in Ecclesiastical Relations". "Dumbarton Oaks", 11, 1957.



“Byzantine Music”<sup>9</sup> shows how religion was understood as a tool in diplomatic dealings, and the impact it had on states “baptised” by Byzantium. The significance of silk trading with Genoa, Venice, the Christian west and the Muslim world and its impact on diplomacy is shown in the articles of Cecily J. Hilsdale and David Jacoby.<sup>10 11</sup>

The French diplomatic practice, which makes up a significant part of the sub topic of Byzantine diplomacy, has undergone several changes from its conception. While its origins lie and can be derived from the Renaissance ideal diplomat, the main features which came to the French diplomatic practice when regarding the assignment of Ambassadors was laid out in Wicquefort’s „The Ambassador and his Functions“.<sup>12</sup> The book highlights the qualities sought in diplomats of the XVI-XVIII century. Worthy of mentioning are the qualities of specific knowledge, usually history, and of specific language which help in carrying out negotiations. Needless to say, negotiations were always present during the given time period.

The role of diplomats and on the traditions of their negotiations was further elaborated in the book „On the Manner of Negotiating with Princes“ by Monsieur de Callieres.<sup>13</sup> The book elaborates on the duties and characteristics of the diplomats and the art of negotiation where Wicquefort left off. De Callieres addresses the diplomat on a more characteristic level such as stating that a diplomat must be honest, but also cunning. He further discusses the diplomats approach to various other people who have an impact on his mission’s success: from viceroys to envoys, from agents of small states to ladies of the court.

We can also turn to the book by Tabettha Leich Ewing titled “Rumor, Diplomacy and War in Enlightenment Paris”.<sup>14</sup> It shows the extent to which diplomats were used not only abroad, but locally when the spread of a specific rumour could help influence the King or his court to take up or reject a specific decision or action.

All of the stated authors contribute to the consideration if the Byzantine diplomatic practices can be labelled as the diplomatic practices of a declining power. The need for this specific discussion is of utmost importance since otherwise the labelling of Byzantine diplomatic practices as belonging to a declining power remain ungrounded in fact and are just “taken for granted”. The

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<sup>9</sup> Egon Wellesz “Byzantine Music”. *“Proceedings of Musical Association”*, 59, 1932.

<sup>10</sup> David Jacoby, “Silk economics and cross-cultural artistic interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim world, and the Christian West”. *“Dumbarton Oaks Papers”*, 58, 2004, 197 – 240.

<sup>11</sup> Cecily J. Hilsdale, “The imperial image at the End of Exile: The Byzantine Embroidered Silk in Genoa and the Treaty of Nymphain”. *“Dumbarton Oaks Papers”*, 64, 2010, 151 – 199.

<sup>12</sup> Abraham de Wicquefort, „*The Ambassador and his Functions*“. Leicester: Leicester University, 1716.

<sup>13</sup> Monsieur de Callieres, *“On the Manner of Negotiating with Princes”*. Paris: Mercure Galant, 1716.

<sup>14</sup> Tabettha Leich Ewing, „*Rumor, Diplomacy and War in Enlightenment Paris*“ Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2014.

diplomatic practices of the United States will also be used to further compare and elaborate on the given discussion.

We must also address the problem of American declinism. The book by Fareed Zakaria titled ‘‘The Post-American world’’ tackles this specific issue. In his book, the author analyzes how the United States are losing their position as the major power in the world, but not through conventional means of economic turmoil or military defeats, but as its growth is not able to match the growth of others. In a sense United States’ declines comes about through a ‘‘peaceful outgrowing’’ by others. Moreover the book by Gustave Le Bon on the psychology of masses helps shed light on why the US is perceived to be in decline and why such perception transitions into reality. Lastly we will turn to Jack Zetkovic and Geoffrey Wiseman and their respective articles on the diplomatic history of the US and the distinctive practices employed by US. These and other authors will provide information on the decline of the United States as a whole for the second portion of the paper. Needless to say numerous other authors and their work will greatly contribute to the analysis and comprehension of this paper, but due to the constraints of the given paper could not be mentioned here.

#### Theoretical background

The theoretical aspect of the paper rests on several key theories needed to understand the question at hand. Before we can begin our analysis, we must define, what we will mean by the term diplomacy. As stated in the introduction chapter of this paper diplomacy is - ‘‘ the profession, activity or skill of managing international relations, often by a countries representative abroad and a tactful way of dealing with people’’. However, upon closer examination it can be described as so much more. Based on various schools of thought diplomacy can even be relationships on an everyday basis, multicultural interaction and others. Least to say, that diplomacy can take many forms which often would not be linked to it. Paul Sharp describes diplomacy as ‘‘a way in which relations between groups that regard themselves as separate ought to be conducted if the principle of living in groups is to be retained as good, and if unnecessary and unwanted conflict is to have a chance of being avoided’’.<sup>15</sup> This description is derived from the notion that ‘‘diplomacy cannot be defined decisively, not least because other people will continue to use the term in different ways’’.<sup>16</sup> In a sense the concept of diplomacy is very vague since clear definition of the concept limits, both the field of the subject and the knowledge it can draw upon. Furthermore, people will still continue to add the label of diplomacy to any interaction between states. Relating to Sharp’s understanding

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<sup>15</sup> Paul Sharp, ‘‘Herbert Butterfield, the English School and the Civilizing Virtues of Diplomacy’’, *International Affairs*, 79(4), 2003, 855-878.

<sup>16</sup> Ten pat, 858.

of diplomacy we can constitute it as a sum of negotiation, foreign policy and diplomatic practices. Vincent Pouliot's definition of diplomacy is also encompassed of similar additives: 'As a category of analysis, the concept of diplomacy then boils down to three key components: first, diplomacy is a process (of claiming authority and jurisdiction); second, it is relational (it operates at the interface between one's polity and others); and third, it is political (involving both representation and governing)'.<sup>17</sup> From the varying descriptions we can conclude that it is not mistaken to take foreign policy as part of diplomacy. It has been a part of diplomacy since the dawn of the human race, since primitive societies as well as more advanced ones that followed them did not differentiate the engagements with other societies on the basis of diplomacy and foreign policy. Diplomacy and foreign policy could and were used interchangeably. To an extent the same is true even today as authors like Nicholas Murray Butler, George Kenan and Henry Kissinger use the term interchangeably. The latter's book titled 'Diplomacy' constitutes a prime example as to how interwoven diplomacy and foreign policy are.<sup>18</sup> We can further argue that foreign policy can be analyzed under the banner of diplomacy since not all state to state interactions are done by diplomats, while the action often is labelled as diplomacy. Moreover, as we will see further, diplomats are not always 'diplomats' since some are 'political diplomats', and did not go through the diplomat selection process.

Now we can turn to the aspect of why is it important to analyze diplomatic practices, of which a portion of examples are such. The common answer can be found in 'The Sage Handbook of Diplomacy' which goes as the following: 'if we can accept that states, or their representatives, very often approach matters of common concern simply by talking things through, then diplomacy may be seen as an instrument of foreign policy. One way of getting what you want is by talking to other people'.<sup>19</sup> The context of where one talks, how one talks, the mannerisms of the talk, vocal shifts are just but a few of examples which impact the negotiation aspect of diplomacy; and only scratch the surface. The analysis of practice in diplomacy is linked with the critical theory of international relations. Their research contributes to the understanding of diplomacy in more ways than just negotiation and representation. Due to their research 'we can appreciate that diplomacy is not merely an inherited courtly profession, but actually is all around us, not a mere practice of trained initiates but an everyday vocation and mode of living. We can also learn that the fragmented, incoherent, but mainly unfocused accounts of diplomacy provided by mainstream international relations are not weaknesses. They are clues that something very interesting might be

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<sup>17</sup> Vincent Pouliot and Jeremy Cornut, "Practice theory and the study of diplomacy: A research agenda", *Cooperation and Conflict*, 1(19), 2005, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Henry Kissinger, *"Diplomacy"*, New York: Simon & Shuster, 1994.

<sup>19</sup> Costas M. Constantinou et al., *Sage Handbook of Diplomacy* London: SAGE publications Ltd., 2016.

going on that needs to be investigated and accounted for.’’<sup>20</sup> All of these discussions contribute to the general understanding of diplomacy and the relation of various factors which might constitute what diplomacy actually is. Furthermore it helps to establish principles by which diplomacy operates and what the established principles imply. Once more quoting a paragraph from the ‘‘The Sage Handbook of Diplomacy’’ the importance of practices and the critical theory in general is shown as: exposing the ethical and power implications of different practices of diplomacy, and specifically the marginalization, hierarchies, exclusions and alienations that these practices consciously or unconsciously produce. <.> [and] have helped to bring the field of diplomatic studies into conversation with other fields of international relations and underscored the significance of opening up diplomacy to scholarly developments beyond the discipline’’.<sup>21</sup> As a point by which it is important to study diplomatic practices and history in general (which makes a portion of the paper) can be summed up by a quoted paragraph from Kissinger’s book ‘‘Diplomacy’’: ‘‘They study of history offers no manual of instructions that can be applied automatically; history teaches by analogy, shedding light on the likely consequences of comparable situations. But each generation must determine for itself which circumstances are in fact comparable.’’<sup>22</sup>

Next we turn to one of the essential theories to the paper – realism. The realist theory is widely popular in the international relations. It is divided into neorealist, neoclassical realism and classical realism on which we will focus on. Classical realists believe that the ‘‘prone to conflict’’ human nature is to blame for the perpetual conflict. The axioms of the position of the states as central actors in international politics and their rational actions, the anarchic nature of the international system and desire to secure power to assure ones survival are held true by all of the realists. The ideas of Markus Kornprobst on the implications of realism to statecraft, strategy and diplomacy are of great importance. Kronprobst argues that statecraft in realism is ‘‘<.> about prudent reasoning. The end of this reasoning is state survival’’.<sup>23</sup> Basically through reasoning and understanding of strength in numbers people band together which consequently results in the formation of the state, and due to the violent conflict of it, people are interested in the state’s survival since it directly translates to their own survival. Strategy in turn ‘‘revolves around relating means to the ends. Strategy stands in the middle between means and ends’’.<sup>24</sup> It, by default, is considered as a grand strategy with all its additives. The diplomatic aspect, in turn, comes as a ‘‘end’’ of an act of balance of power (‘‘such a balance is the only kind of (tenuous) stability that is

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<sup>20</sup> Ten pat, 21.

<sup>21</sup> Ten pat, 22.

<sup>22</sup> Henry Kissinger, *“Diplomacy”*, New York: Simon & Shuster, 1994.

<sup>23</sup> Constantinou, 55.

<sup>24</sup> Ten pat, 55.

possible in an anarchic system)”.<sup>25</sup> As we can see, diplomacy here is intertwined with foreign policy. It is an “end”; however it can also act as a medium which enhances the states power. Quoting Sharp “Morgenthau presents diplomacy as an undervalued instrument of foreign policy and one which, if used properly, confers the advantages of a force multiplier, and a morally significant one at that. Good diplomacy enhances the more material instruments of power allowing a state to ‘punch above its weight’ or achieve what it wants more cheaply. Bad diplomacy can result in a state using its other foreign policy instruments unwisely and underperforming as a consequence. In addition, however good diplomacy is good because it is associated with pursuing foreign policy objectives peacefully and taking a bigger picture view of what needs to be done”.<sup>26</sup> Putting it plainly, good diplomacy relates to pursuit of diplomacy and peace without resorting to war, while bad diplomacy is using foreign policy instruments unwisely. For the purpose of the thesis we will use the term of defensive diplomacy as “good diplomacy” which does not increase the states power and seeks to preserve it at the given time. On the other hand we can pose a question which makes these concepts problematic: what if a state is using aggressive means to justify stability? Moreover, what if the pursuit of stability is the only mean for preserving ones declining/declined security? What if the pursuit of peace at home as achieved through conflict elsewhere? The later can be answered by the last theory discussed – offshore balancing.

Lastly, of great importance is the theory of “offshore balancing”. A derivative of the realist theory offshore balancing seeks to explain how a state can balance the power of another state while not directly engaging it. While the realist theory explains the interaction as direct, the offshore balancing theory assumes and accounts for both the power of the original state and a “mediator power” who will do the real balancing. John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt discussed the use of offshore balancing as something the United States should consider if it seeks to maintain its power position in the world, in their article “The case for Offshore balancing” (“Rather, by husbanding U.S. strength, offshore balancing would preserve U.S. primacy far into the future and safeguard liberty at home”).<sup>27</sup> The description the authors provide can be deduced and explained in the same manner the authors had in mind. It goes as the following: “under offshore balancing, a state (the US) would calibrate its military posture according to the distribution of power in the key regions. If there is no potential hegemon in sight in the given regions, then there is no reason to deploy ground or air forces there and little need for a large military establishment at home. <.> because it takes many years for any country to acquire the capacity to dominate its regions, the

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<sup>25</sup> Ten pat, 55.

<sup>26</sup> Ten pat, 17.

<sup>27</sup> John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, “The Case for Offshore Balancing. A Superior U.S. Grand Strategy”, *Foreign Affairs*, 8(9), 2016, 70 - 83.

given state (the US) would see it coming and have time to respond. The state (the US) should turn to the regional forces as the first line of defence, letting them uphold the balance of power in their own neighbourhood, <.> it may occasionally make sense to keep certain assets overseas, such as small military contingents, intelligence-gathering facilities, or preposition equipment, but in general the state (the U.S.) should pass the buck to regional powers, as they have a far greater interest in preventing any state from dominating them.’<sup>28</sup> The authors conclude that the theory’s essential aim is ‘to remain offshore as long as possible, while recognizing that it is sometimes necessary to come onshore. If that happens, the state (the US) should make its allies do as much of the heavy lifting as possible and remove its own forces as soon as it can’.<sup>29</sup> In a sense it advocates for the conservation of power of one state and only exercise it once it becomes necessary. As stated before the balancing is done through a local power rather than directly with a possible pledge to come to aid if such a need would arise. Moreover it does not hold peace as an ideal to be strived for. Peace, in their understanding is good if it suits the state’s needs.

The aspect of declinism will be explained in the chapter allocated specifically for the discussion of the decline of the United States. For now we shift towards the historical overview of Byzantium and its rich history.

#### The fall of Byzantium

From its inception in the year 313 as titled ‘the Eastern Roman Empire’ till its decline and eventual downfall in 1453 Byzantium stood at the frontier between the west and the east. Skipping large portions of the Byzantine history till its declines does injustice to the Byzantine Empire and its history, however the full extent of its history cannot be explained in this paper alone, since it required careful study and a greater amount of space to put in detail. Many scholars point out its advances in warfare strategy and intrigue diplomacy, however many scholars fail to acknowledge that from the beginning to the end, Byzantium was fighting a losing battle for its survival. While it did have its fair share of great leaders, emperors and empresses (Justinian the 1<sup>st</sup>, Irene of Athens, Leo the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Basil the 2<sup>nd</sup> and many more) it did crumble to a combination of internal strife and external forces. Its diplomatic tradition from the start was reflective of this, since it did not focus on enlarging the empire. Rather it focused on maintaining its current borders and defending them. However, to the surprise of the Byzantines, not every enemy can be swayed with the promise of silk and jewels, gold or royal marriage. Not every enemy can be recruited to your ranks, or be assassinated by his own ‘turncoat’. This is precisely what occurred after the Seljuk Turks found eastern Anatolia and Armenia. John Sheppard, throughout his book, mentions several

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<sup>28</sup> Ten pat, 73-74.

<sup>29</sup> Ten pat, 74.

times the importance of Byzantine diplomacy, since it did not or could not count on the legions of Rome for help.<sup>30</sup> Its own military ranks, diminished and abandoned throughout its history and at the time when the Seljuk Turks were upon them, remained only as a shadow of its former self. Edward Luttwak in his interview when presenting his book on the grand strategy of the Byzantine Empire talks about the training of the soldiers as:

“A young man would not be able to face the enemy head on if he was recruited or joined the military fairly recently. He would need to first undergo rigorous training of one year of short sword training, one year of spear or javelin training, one year of firing a bow and in later years mounted archery. A Byzantine soldier on the field of battle would have gone through at least 3 years of military training.”

In the later years of the Empire, this sort of military was dwindling and being abandoned, since mercenaries were being hired to fight Byzantium's battles. However the maintenance of mercenaries was not cheap. Adding the fact that larger and larger armies approached, more garrisons had to be maintained and more mercenaries hired, which had a great impact on the state budget.<sup>31</sup> Knowing that the Byzantine diplomacy heavily relied on the splendour of its gifts, having a budget deficit severely impaired the diplomats' abilities. However these were only the internal aspects of a crumbling empire. On its borders the Normans threatened Byzantine provinces in southern Italy, the provinces on the Adrian Sea were threatened by Croatia and in the east the Seljuk Turks arrived to Armenia and Eastern Anatolia.<sup>32</sup> The confrontation with the Seljuk Turks culminated in the battle of Manzikert in whose aftermath, the Byzantine Emperor, Romanos the 4<sup>th</sup> Diogenes, was captured by the Sultan Alp Arslan, which began the final decline of the Empire.<sup>33</sup>

After the capture of Romanos, the Byzantine Empire plummeted to internal strife and disarray. One after the other Emperors were overthrown until Andronikos the 1<sup>st</sup> Komnenos, with the help of the military, took the Byzantine throne.<sup>34</sup> The constant clashes for the throne weakened one of the most important backbones of the people, the empire and the diplomacy. The strife for power weakened the Empire through internal wars and revolts. Both the diplomacy and the people were impacted indirectly. The Emperors line of succession and its prestige were very important in diplomacy, often used to show grandeur and continuity since Constantine the Great. It was a direct link between the Byzantines and the Romans. The people of Byzantium also clinged to this belief

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<sup>30</sup> Jonathan Shepard, Simon Franklin, „*Byzantine Diplomacy*“. Hampshire: VARIORIUM, 1992.

<sup>31</sup> Warren Treadgold, „*A history of the Byzantine state and society*“ Stanford: Stanford university press, 1997.

<sup>32</sup> Alexander Alexandrovich Vasiliev, „*History of Byzantine Empire*“ Madison: The University of Madison press, 1935.

<sup>33</sup> Paul Markham, „The Battle of Manzikert: Military Dissaster or Political Failure?“ <

<https://web.archive.org/web/20070513082203/http://www.deremilitari.org/resources/articles/markham.htm> [Last accessed 2018.01.14].

<sup>34</sup> John Julius Norwich, „*A Short History of Byzantium*“ Ringwood, 1998.

(interestingly both the Emperors and the population of Byzantium always called and labelled themselves as Romans and not as Byzantines).

The reign of Andronikos the 1<sup>st</sup> Komnenos saw attempts of consolidating the state to what it previously was. Andronikos tackled corruption and the power abused of the nobility and therefore was loved by the common peasant. Moreover, as historians put it, ‘he gave out the impression of an intelligent charming man; however he was ruthless and cruel. His laws were severe, but just’.<sup>35</sup> His fight with the nobility and corrupt officials often ended in executions, which in the long turn transformed his reign from a just one, to a one based on terror. Being a military man, Andronikos failed to prevent the Adrian Sea provinces being annexed by Croatia, and the declaration of independence of Serbia, which was part of the Byzantine Empire.<sup>36</sup> His most difficult challenge came with the invasion of the Normans in Greece, which he did not see being completed, since he was overthrown by Isaac Angelos.

The rule of Isaac the 2<sup>nd</sup> Angelos was marked with success as the Normans were pushed out of Greece, however the Empire was disintegrating. Isaac was as successful in maintaining imperial integrity as his predecessor, since during his reign the Bulgars with the Vlachs started to rebel which led to the formation of the second Bulgarian Empire.<sup>37</sup> He failed to acquire new land during the third crusade, although he had an opportunity for it. His internal decisions further depleted the imperial treasury, decreased the moral authority of Byzantium and lead to further fragmentation of the Empire.

The Byzantine Empire was completely shattered following the event of the Forth Crusade. Pope Innocent the 3<sup>rd</sup> organized a crusade against Egypt; however his call did not amount in the numbers of the crusaders he had anticipated.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore he lacked the funds to pay for the Venetians, whose fleet was to take the crusaders to Egypt. The Venetians themselves were reluctant to wage war with Egypt, since it was their trading partner and instead, being guided by Doge Enrico Dandolo sailed to the port city of Zara, which revolted recently and asked Hungary for protection. The city fell shortly after the crusaders arrived. The pope, still wishing for the crusade against Egypt to continue, pardoned the crusaders, however the crusade has already fallen apart and divulged from the pope. With the death of Theobald the 3<sup>rd</sup>, leader of the crusade, leadership was passed to Boniface of Montferrat, who was a friend of Philip of Swabia.<sup>39</sup> These men have married into the Byzantine imperial family. Philip’s brother-in-law was the son (Alexios Angelos) of the deposed

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<sup>35</sup> Paul Magdalino, “The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos 1143 – 1180”, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

<sup>36</sup> Ten pat, 45.

<sup>37</sup> John Julius Norwich, “A Short History of Byzantium” Ringwood, 1998.

<sup>38</sup> Ten pat, 26.

<sup>39</sup> Ten pat, 61.



emperor Isaac the 2<sup>nd</sup> Angelos. He had gone around Europe in search of support for his claim for the Byzantine throne. He promised the crusaders 200000 silver marks, the supplies for crusades needed to reach Egypt and the reimbursement of the funds to the crusades to pay the Venetians. The pope, having learned of this promise, forbade the attack on Constantinople, but his disapproval arrived too late as the crusades have already set sail to Constantinople.<sup>40</sup>

The usurper of the Byzantine throne Alexios the 3<sup>rd</sup>, who has deposed Isaac the 2<sup>nd</sup> Angelos, further malnourished the state and did not organize a resistance to the coming crusaders.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore he fled the city leaving the throne of Byzantium for Alexios Angelos, who took the name Alexios the 4<sup>th</sup>. He began organizing the reward for the crusaders, but since the Empire was facing a financial catastrophe, the full reward could not be given. He managed to pay roughly half of what he had promised.<sup>42</sup> This act angered the crusaders who declared war on the new emperor. Inside the court room, opposition to the emperor was also fierce which culminated in the assassination of Alexios the 4<sup>th</sup> by a member of his court.

Using the assassination of the emperor as the pretext, the crusaders assaulted Constantinople. The crusaders started a fire that ravaged parts of the great city and later on, killed the assassin titled Alexos the 5<sup>th</sup>. The sacking of Constantinople started and lasted for three days, before order was restored and when the crusaders decided what was to be done with the newly conquered city.<sup>43</sup> The pope was reluctant to release the crusaders from their pledge to the crusade, however his legate had already done so, therefore the crusaders had not legal binds to the crusade anymore. After order had been restored to the city, the crusaders followed up with the plan they had made earlier: by designating 12 electors half of which were crusaders and the other half of Venetians, to elect a new emperor for a new Empire which was to be known as the Latin Empire. Baldwin of Flanders was elected as the new Emperor with a Venetian Thomas Morosini becoming the patriarch of the new empire.<sup>44</sup> The remaining lands were divided between the other leaders of the crusade and thus the Byzantine Empire was shattered.

After the sacking of Constantinople and the establishment of the Latin Empire, two Byzantines successor states emerged in Nicaea and Epirus. The third successor state in Trebizond was created before the sacking, but did not have much chance on restoring the Byzantine Empire as the former two. The Empire of Nicaea struggled for survival for the coming two decades and lost portions of its land, however the historical chances were in its favour. The coming Mongol invasion

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<sup>40</sup> Ten pat, 62.

<sup>41</sup> Ten pat, 64.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas F. Madden "Crusades: The Illustrated History" Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005.

<sup>43</sup> Ten pat, 80.

<sup>44</sup> Ten pat, 82.

in eastern Anatolia weakened the Sultanate of Rum and allowed the Nicaea to make territorial gains.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand the territorial gains were only ‘‘on the map’’ as the country was ravaged by small Turkic tribesmen and zealots. The Mongols also provided a distraction for Byzantium in their wars with the Seljuk Turks, which allowed them to focus on Constantinople. Constantinople was reclaimed in 1261 and the successor state of Epirus was defeated shortly after. This marked the ascendance of a new dynasty to the Byzantine throne – the Laskarid dynasty – with the crowned emperor Michael the 7<sup>th</sup> Palaiologos.<sup>46</sup> In spite of the reestablishment of the Byzantine Empire, the new ascendancy of a new emperor in the words of John Romer was ‘‘suicidal’’.<sup>47</sup> The empire was ill-equipped to tackle its many adversaries and internal strife. The Latin Crusaders were still present on Byzantine land and required immediate attention, therefore armies from Asia minor were pulled back to confront them. Massive construction projects were also carried out, to repair the damage done to Constantinople following the crusader invasion. The peasantry was heavily taxed, which led to a greater disapproval of the emperor throughout his empire. The tax burden coupled with frequent raids of Turkmen in Asia Minor aggravated the farmer population further.<sup>48</sup> In an attempt to prevent further crusades against Byzantium, Michael the 7<sup>th</sup> allied himself with the Roman church which also increased the resentment for the emperor.

Michael’s the 7<sup>th</sup> successor have had similar luck with the attempts of restoring the empire to its former glory. The continued reliance on mercenaries was costly to the state and often ended up in the pillaging of the countryside by the mercenaries due to them not getting their promised pay. The common folk were the ones being severely hurt by the outcomes and therefore resented Constantinople. Their grievances resulted in civil wars throughout the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>49</sup> Civil wars weakened the already weak military which was not able to tackle the Ottoman Turk advance in Anatolia. The Ottomans managed to create a state with a capital in Bursa, roughly a hundred kilometres away from Constantinople. After the death of the Emperor Andronikos the 3<sup>rd</sup>, a new civil war broke out since Andronikos left his young son in regency to Anne of Savoy. John Cantacuzenus, the *de facto* leader of Byzantium had ambitions for the Byzantine throne. Being a wealthy nobleman, he garnered support from the other nobles to become the regent of the empire.<sup>50</sup> While the initial attempt was unsuccessful, he did manage to carve out the title of Emperor of Thrace. The civil war was also used by the emerging Serbian empire, which managed to take the

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<sup>45</sup> Ten pat 85.

<sup>46</sup> Stephen W. Reinert ‘‘Fragmentation (1204 – 1453)’’, *‘‘The Oxford History of Byzantium’’*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

<sup>47</sup> John Romer, ‘‘Byzantium: The Lost Empire’’ < <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0344994/> > [Accessed 2018.01.14]

<sup>48</sup> Stephen W. Reinert ‘‘Fragmentation (1204 – 1453)’’, *‘‘The Oxford History of Byzantium’’*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

<sup>49</sup> Robert Browning, *‘‘The Byzantine Empire’’*, Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992.

<sup>50</sup> Ten pat, 56.

Byzantine holdings in Macedonia. John Cantacuzenus was victorious in the civil war and seized control of the Byzantine Empire. He hired mercenaries to retain military power; however most of his mercenaries were defeated by the crusaders.<sup>51</sup> The Ottoman Turks advanced on former Byzantine territories claiming them for themselves and effectively surrounding Byzantium.

The 1354 earthquake in Gallipoli damaged the Byzantine fort, which guarded the passage between Asia Minor and the Balkans. This allowed the Ottoman troops to pass into southern Europe and battle the newly established but weak states.<sup>52</sup> By the time the Byzantine civil war ended, the Ottomans have already defeated the newly enlarged Serbia, claiming most of its land for themselves and made vassals of what remained of it. The Ottomans started to dominate in the Balkans and had Byzantium completely surrounded. Aid for the Byzantines was scarce. The majority of the European leaders were preoccupied with their own affairs and were reluctant to commit troops to a dying empire. A religious union was considered and almost made a reality.<sup>53</sup> The union between Rome and Byzantium was made, by which some troops were sent to Byzantium. This type of religious union was not the first of its kind, however it was received in the same way as have been other before it. It was resented by the nobility, by the clergy and the general population. At this time the emperor lived in an under populated city, hated and resented by its population for forming a union, with the peace kept solely by the military, mercenaries and foreign troops.

The last stand of Constantinople was in 1453. The new Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror rightfully saw the city in between his large empire and wanted to claim it for his own.<sup>54</sup> It would be wrong to state, that the Ottomans were enemies with the Byzantines. In fact neither wanted war with the other. Several treaties between the empires were signed before the ascendance of the new Sultan between the Ottomans and the Byzantines. On the other hand, the new Sultan was ambitious and wanted the city specifically. As he noted in his letters with Constantine the 11<sup>th</sup> that he solely wanted the city. He even offered a province for the emperor if he surrendered the city without a battle. The emperor declined his offer stating that the city meant everything to him and he will not abandon it. He therefore proceeded of releasing Mehmed from all of its obligations which paved the way for the siege of Constantinople.<sup>55</sup> On May 29th 1453 the city fell to the Sultan's forces. Records don't detail the ending of the Emperor Constantine the 11<sup>th</sup>, but often mention him, casting of his imperial regalia and charging into hand to hand combat with the Sultan's men to defend the

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<sup>51</sup> Ten pat, 57.

<sup>52</sup> Reinert, 96.

<sup>53</sup> Steven Runciman *"The Fall of Constantinople 1453"*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

<sup>54</sup> Ten pat, 53.

<sup>55</sup> Ten pat, 56.

city after the walls of Constantinople had fallen.<sup>56</sup> Thus marks the end of the Byzantine Empire, which had outlived its sister, the Western Roman Empire. The empire was assumed to be the first one to fall, but managed to survive way beyond its twin sister. Despite being vastly outnumbered by potential enemies, through cunning diplomacy, warfare and imperial grace managed to live on, even though it was fighting a war it was destined to lose. In the next chapter, we turn to the mentioned cunning diplomacy and other means which helped maintain the survival of the Byzantine Empire.

#### Historical overview of Byzantine diplomatic practice

After the separation of the Roman Empire into the western and eastern parts, different diplomatic practices emerged. The borders of the Eastern Roman Empire were understood as the historical borders of the empire. Therefore the protection of the said borders was crucial even though through the course of the empire it saw both expansion and decline. Diplomacy in this regard coincided with the aim of preservation. One of the main aims was to maintain the grandeur of the Empire. The eastern neighbour – Sassanid Persia – was, at the time, the first contender for the eastern borders of Byzantium. Nevertheless aspirants for the border provinces, on all fronts, were present. To combat rising neighbour power Byzantium employed various tactics to discourage its neighbours from direct aggression against Byzantium. The type of tactics ranged from the well known manipulation of the senses (monuments with symbolic significance, lavish dishes and dresses, scents and tastes) (present throughout all of the empire's history) to strategic withdrawal from or granting autonomy to a rebellious region to foster other's involvement with quenching the rebellion. For simplicity sake we can layer the diplomatic practices the same way Sheppard has done in his book by analyzing different time periods: 300-800, 800-1204 and 1204-1453.<sup>57</sup>

Regarding the later tactics of "strategic withdrawal" Byzantium sought not to use its military forces to combat rebellions as the soldiers were expensive to train and losses in their ranks signalled wasted funds. One must keep in mind, that the strategy (or Grand Strategy) of the Byzantines and in realism in general is state survival. To that extent Byzantines employed "good diplomacy" to tackle their adversaries. More so, the foreign policy aspect at the time was not considered in the same manner, we conceive of it now, therefore diplomacy was used in place of foreign policy and both were deeply embedded in the strategy for survival. An exemplary mention of "good diplomacy" can be made regarding the Gepid tribe in the Northern Balkans.<sup>58</sup> Byzantium knew the importance of satellite states on its borders as it acted as a buffer between adversaries

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<sup>56</sup> Ten pat, 57.

<sup>57</sup> Shepard, Franklin, 25.

<sup>58</sup> Alexander Sarantis, "War and Diplomacy in Pannonia and the Northwest Balkans during the reign of Justinian: The Gepid Threat and Imperial responses". *Dumbarton Oak Papers*, 63, 2009, 15-40.

and the borders of the Empire, the Gepid tribe, in this regard, acted exactly as that – a semi-autonomous, satellite state-tribe. We can argue, that a strategy lasting several years might have been beyond comprehension at the time, but neither for nor against, history proves that such a strategy was possible and efficient. Moreover, history, regarding the Gepid tribe, shows the continuity of Byzantine diplomatic practice between the changing of Emperors. In other words Emperors, we might guess, were tempted by personal ambitions, still knew and held Byzantine interests in the forefront. The Gepid tribe as part of Attila's horde came to Europe and remained in the Northern Balkans north of the Carpathian Mountains. The Byzantines "domesticated" the Gepid tribe, at times having the pay tribute to Constantinople or being part as co-belligerents of a Byzantine campaign against its enemies. The "domestication" of the tribe was done either through bribes, gifts, military threats or geographic encirclement and recruitment. Of all mentioned bribes and gifts are the easiest ones to comprehend. Often warlords and/or khans of the tribe were bribed to attack a specific land or city. Gifts also include the giving of cities to the tribe to inhabit which acted both as a gift which pleases, establishes and/or improves relation with the Byzantine state and the emperor, but also "sedates" the tribe. The removal of the nomad lifestyle of the Gepid and their inhabitancy in a given city allowed simplifying the conductance of relations with them. No longer did the diplomats and ambassadors have to wonder the plains in search of the current leader of the Gepids. This also allowed the synchronisation of both the Gepid and the Byzantine army when military campaigns were needed as it was known where the Gepid force would mobilize. Furthermore the mobilization information would also prove useful if Gepids turn hostile towards the empire or started to harbour greater ambitions than the Byzantine emperors would want. The aspect of military threats and geographic encirclement were also employed against the Gepid tribe.<sup>59</sup> The emperor Justinian used the Gepids for his military expansion towards Northern Italy to great success, however all of the conquered territory was part of the Byzantine Empire and none was given to the Gepid tribe which allowed to strategically encircling them. Furthermore, Justinian used military threats, even going so far as sending a military detachment to wage war with the Gepids and their Hun allies which led to a crushing defeat for the Gepid tribe.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore Justinian would support Gepid adversaries when they and the Gepids were at war with one another. This accomplished three key aspects: 1) Limited/prevented the rise of the Gepid state or as a regional power which could threaten Byzantium; 2) Weakened the adversaries of Byzantium (if the Gepid tribe was fighting Byzantine enemies) since it lost valuable manpower and; 3) Allowed for an easy conquest post-conflict since neither side had either the will or the manpower to halt the Byzantine advance on its newly conquered territory or territory it had held previously. This also allowed the

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<sup>59</sup> Ten pat, 33.

<sup>60</sup> Ten pat, 33.

usage of the territory as a gift for either side depending on the preferences of the emperor or the expansion of the empire. A similar tactic was employed by Justinian against Kutringus as stated by Sarantis “Justinian encouraged to departure of Chinialon’s Kurtingus from the Balkans by forging an alliance with their rivals, the Utigur Huns of Sandil, whom he incited to ravage Kutringur territory west of Don River. This persuaded Chinialon and the majority of Kurtingurs to depart from roman territory, although two thousand of them were allowed to settle in Thrace as Roman federates under their general Sinnion.”<sup>61</sup> The recruitment aspect links to several other key practices employed by Byzantium. A Gepid warlord, Mundo, was recruited into the Byzantine army.<sup>62</sup> This allowed exerting influence on both Mundo as a person, and through him on the Gepids, which held him in high esteem. It also coincides with the common practice at the time (VI century) of recruitment as a sign of development, of being worthy to join the most prestigious army in the world. The prestige aspect “lulled” the person into a sort of dream and pacified him, effectively preventing his aspirations of conquest against “the Great Empire of Byzantium”. Here we can add a direct linkage to the case of offshore balancing. Through promotion of external strife, Byzantium secured its borders.

Leaving the Gepid tribe, we can turn to practices employed in the further west. The “lulling” aspect was not as effective in Western Europe since kings and emperors in the west knew what wealth meant. Nevertheless it was still attempted by other means. Once the western envoys or monarchs entered Constantinople, various means were employed to tend to the senses of the guests. However tall towers and walls did not amaze the western guests as it did with the eastern ones, since the majority of the westerners had similar architectural wonders back home. That is to say not all westerners were equally unreceptive of the Byzantine welcoming. The main attribute, which was desired by the westerners, and often granted by the Byzantines is entry into the “royal” blood line. The Byzantine emperors drew direct lineage from the Roman emperors. The marrying into the Byzantine court was held in high esteem and was used as a bargaining tool by the Byzantines. The tactic became more prevalent once Charlemagne was crowned in Saint Peters basilica. The significance of the coronation was in the title itself. It changed Charlemagne’s holdings to *imperium*.<sup>63</sup> It came in direct conflict with the Byzantine title of emperor and led to debates in the Byzantine court, which concluded of welcoming Charlemagne to the imperial bloodline of the Romans. The given conclusion had the two following outcomes both beneficial for Byzantium: 1) It gave more prestige to the royal bloodline of the Romans effectively encouraging others to marry into it, which opens more diplomatic manoeuvres for the Byzantine diplomats and; 2) It allows

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<sup>61</sup> Ten pat, 35.

<sup>62</sup> Ten pat, 24.

<sup>63</sup> Shepard, 24.

Byzantium to call the Franks to war in the time of need, effectively binding them as military allies through the royal bloodline. Sheppard, in his book quotes Malalas describing how a reception of guests in the capital of Byzantium looked like. He writes the following:

“When the king of Lazi, Zathius visited Constantinople in 520, he was received by the Emperor, baptized, and having become a Christian, married a Roman wife and took her back to his own country. He, had been crown by Justin, the emperor of Romans, and had put on a Roman imperial crown and a white cloak of pure silk. Instead of the purple boarder it had a gold imperial boarder; in its middle was a true purple portrait medallion with likeness of the emperor Justin. He also wore a white tunic, a paragaudion, with gold imperial embroideries equally including the likeness of the emperor”

The significance of the type of reception cannot be understated. It must be understood in the context at the time. A king from western Georgia with a 1/20 of a territory that of Byzantium is being made king, crowned by the emperor, wears clothes in similar fashion of the emperor and is hailed by the same crowd as the emperor of the Romans. Moreover the clothes have the emperor’s symbol effectively making the newly crowned king an ally of Byzantium. Furthermore it shows king Ztathius, how rich and powerful the ruler of the Byzantium is. The bestowal of titles and extravagant gifts also signalled the level of development a state had achieved to be welcomed and recognized by Byzantium. The given examples contribute to the importance of studying diplomatic practices. While one, might believe that the inception of an alliance is being written into existence on a treaty signed by both parties, it can be understood so way before. The catering to the senses of foreign guests sways them to the Byzantine side. The employed practices show the interesting procedure which leads up to the inception of an alliance. The significance of the reception of foreign envoys will be elaborated further on.

The discussion of Byzantine diplomatic missions and diplomats will be done further, but at the given time period we can discuss the practice of conducting treaties according to the both Byzantine and foreign customs. The flexibility of Byzantine diplomats can be seen by them taking oaths of loyalty both in Roman and local tradition, going so far as to allow them to be uttered in the native tongue. The Byzantine diplomats also wore garments of native origin as a will of good gesture to the locals which in turn fostered common understanding and good relations. Examples of this type can be found in Sheppard’s book ‘<.’ in 395 A.D. Rufinus, went to meet the Visigoth king Alaric wearing Gothic costume a military dress. In 561 A.D. the peace treaty with the Persians was not only signed in Roman fashion but also sealed in more Persico.’<sup>64</sup> Sheppard even notes that

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<sup>64</sup> Shepard 30-31.

the Byzantines were liberal enough to allow religious oaths to be uttered by non-Christians. Thus we see the lengths (even though it may seem insignificant) that the Byzantine diplomats went to seal the deal with its adversaries.

On the other hand, diplomats were not the only people sent to discuss relations with other nations. A combination of intelligence gathering and subterfuge was also present. Intelligence allowed for the gathering of information of potential opportunities to push forward the Byzantine agenda. One of the opportunities can be described as an opportunity of assassination. A clear example here can be taken from Edward N. Luttwak's book 'The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire. A great menace to the states of Europe at the time was the Hun leader Attila, whom the Byzantine Emperor Chrysaphius attempted to assassinate. By gathering intelligence on the Huns, the Byzantines identified that the Huns would succumb to internal strife if Attila was assassinated, therefore when sending diplomats to the great Hun warlord, he also sent people, whose job was to recruit a potential assassin to kill Attila.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless the plot backfired and Attila remained amongst the living and as a consequence demanded more payment from the Byzantines to not ravage their holdings and lands. Similar exploits were employed through out Byzantine history, where local rulers were bribed to give up their holdings for positions in the Byzantine state.<sup>66</sup> However this signals the presence of an intelligence and subterfuge aspect of the Byzantine diplomacy. Moreover it begs the question whether it can be considered as 'good diplomacy'? While it did contribute and allowed for the Byzantine state to 'punch above its weight' the plan backfired and Attila invaded which would be a result of 'bad diplomacy' (not picking the right means to secure the wanted ends).

Another aspect of Byzantine diplomacy, prevalent throughout the Empire's lifespan was the willingness to pay of its adversaries. However the Byzantines managed, in fact, do profit from providing tribute to its enemies indirectly. It relates to the Byzantine ability to extract taxes from its subjects. Quoting Luttwak 'economically, the payment of tribute was not deflationary. The circulation of gold, from taxpayers to the imperial treasury, from the treasury back to the taxpaying economy by way of imperial salaries and payments, was only briefly diverted when tribute was paid. The Huns and all their successors inevitably used their tribute gold to buy necessities and baubles from the Empire – special arrangements were negotiated for boarder markets – hence the gold extorted to the Huns returned to circulate into the empire rather quickly, except for the minute

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<sup>65</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009, 65.

<sup>66</sup> Ten pat, 67.



fraction retained for jewellery”<sup>67</sup>. The efficiency of tax collection transformed the payment of tributes to a type of investments on the government’s behalf, which in the long run profited the empire. Moreover the wealth of Byzantine state can be put into context at the time if one considers the fact that after 4<sup>th</sup> crusade’s destruction of the Byzantine empire and its subsequent revival after 60 years, the sole Greek kingdom, only imperial in name, had more gold in its coffers than any other western state at the time.<sup>68</sup> It was solely due to the efficiency of collecting taxes.

Much as in the period of 300 – 800 in 800 – 1204 Byzantium was facing an increasing amount of small states around its borders of which a portion were the Byzantine subject-states. As Sheppard notes the period of 800 – 1204 sees the increase in intensity of both armed conflict and diplomatic negotiations and embassies. Here he provides an example of the Emperor Constantine, who favoured diplomatic negotiation and intrigue in contrast of the Emperor Nicephorus II Phocas dubbed as ‘a man devoted to warfare whom we call... almost a lover of strife: he does not win nations’ friendship with by offering them money – he subjugates them by terror of the sword’<sup>69</sup>. The essential point is that if Byzantines went to the lengths of labelling an emperor as a ‘lover of strife’ it shows the unusual reaction to conducting relations between states in a different matter other than diplomacy. Warfare, in this respect, was more of an exception to the rule than the rule itself. As we have seen prior that Justinian did use armed force when need arose to subdue the Gepid tribe, but the extent of the armies usage was minimal at the worst, and selective at best. Nicephorus shift to widespread usage of the army, in a sense, contradicted the Byzantine imperial logic, however his ‘force favouritism’ can be a reaction to the changed geo-political realities at the time.

In the period of 300 – 800 Byzantine diplomacy was grateful, in a sense, to the ‘underdevelopment its neighbours’ During that period, most of its neighbours were un-centralised, sporadic nomads and tribes with a few exceptions. This allowed for an easy balance of power against only a handful of rivals Byzantium had at the time. By 800 – 1204 several of Byzantium’s neighbours had reached the development level of Byzantium. What it means for the diplomatic practice is that the ‘tricks’ that awed the barbarians were losing their ‘charm’. As Sheppard notes ‘Byzantium faced a substantial number of potentes, city states and unpredictable mass movements whose underlying economic resources, administrative competence and military organization were in the same league as those available to the Byzantine state’<sup>70</sup>. The accessibility of the world also eased. Much of the infrastructure Byzantine had put in place, were copied from its neighbours and

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<sup>67</sup> Ten pat, 55.

<sup>68</sup> Ten pat, 56.

<sup>69</sup> Shepard, 41.

<sup>70</sup> Ten pat, 44.

reaching distant lands reduced the economic burden of travelling there. This reduced the role of Constantinople as a mediator between states, which reduced its prestige. On the other hand, the usage of envoys flourished.

Byzantines started categorising the state's envoys not based on their culture or religion, but on the strength of its army and its geographical proximity. The practices of diplomatic ceremonies differ slightly from the previous period. Whereas previously, as Sheppard describes: "The emperor seated on his throne of immense size and guarded by mechanical lions, which struck the ground with their tails and roared, was raised to the level of the ceiling while Liudprand of Cremona was still prostrating himself. The conversation therefore had to be conducted through an intermediary."<sup>71</sup> This practice continued in the 800 – 1204 period, however different aspects were stressed. Quoting "Concerning Embassies": "if the foreign envoys come from very distant parts, so that there are a number of peoples between them and ourselves, then we may show them as much and as whatsoever of ours as we wish. Likewise even if they are our neighbours but are inferior in power. But if they far surpass us either in the size of their army or in courage, we should show them neither our wealth nor the beauty of our women, but rather the masses of our men and the good order of our weaponry and the height of our walls."<sup>72</sup> As mentioned before this signals two key things: 1) The traditional shift in what diplomatic practices are employed based on the characteristics of the state the representative represents and; 2) The shift in geo-political climate the Byzantines operated in whereas earlier all of the guests would be treated the same since they were inferior to Byzantium and were more easily impressed, now regarding stronger states the deterrent aspect of diplomacy was more prevalent. Against weaker states the "teasing" aspect of ceremonies paved the way for a formation of possible alliance treaties or helped smooth the business between the states.<sup>73</sup>

A religious branch of diplomatic practice can also be highlighted. It related mostly to the ceremonial display of sacred paintings of saints (icons) and the wondrous city architecture like churches and monuments. It relates specifically with the ecclesial relations aspect present at the given period and more prevalent in the 1204 – 1453 time period. What Sheppard highlights of the religious aspect in the contemporary period is the surrounding of the emperor, during the diplomatic missions either in Constantinople or abroad (usually done in a colossal tent), by his kinsmen and not men, which should be present by contemporary diplomatic protocol.<sup>74</sup> Disregarding the evident parallel between the emperor in the current stature and Jesus, we can also see the promotion of the

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<sup>71</sup> Ten pat, 48.

<sup>72</sup> Ten pat, 53.

<sup>73</sup> Ten pat, 50-51.

<sup>74</sup> Ten pat, 56.

“Byzantine family”. It is a clear example of the tactic discussed previously by which, through marriage, one can enter the family of kings. It is a clear “advertisement” and invitation to Christian kings or their envoys, since this welcoming was only given to Christian rulers. Against Muslims, a different practice was put into place.

The Muslim powers in 800 – 1204 were somewhat of a similar level of development of Byzantium. On the other hand Muslims received different welcoming than their Christian counterparts. This is due to the fact, that what inspired awe for the Christians, did not work on Muslims. The display of icons and churches did not “lull” the Muslim envoys. The interesting part of this is that Constantinople, to Muslims, was an example of a well ordered city. Again quoting Sheppard “in Arabic writings of the ninth and tenth century, the city of Constantinople features as the model of a well ordered city, in which every building, monument and institution attests the authority of the ruler.”<sup>75</sup> The Byzantines knew of this and exploited the Muslim imagining to their own gains. It again relates to the differentiation of diplomatic practices based on given circumstances. This in turn promoted the image of the Byzantine ruler as more just and devoted than of the Muslim rulers. Due to this, Byzantines accomplished both, the portrayal of their ruler as just and worthy of being an ally or worthy of entering a treaty with and encourages the Muslim visitors to council against waging war against “such a perfect city”.

The welcoming of guests and envoys was also part of the diplomatic procedure. One did not enter into Constantinople and got to see the emperor straight away. The envoy had to stand in line (deliberate or real) and wait for the audience. It allowed creating the emperor’s image as important and hard working. It was not unusual to wait for the audience for months. Moreover specific guiding paths were developed to further impress the guests of the emperor. As Ruth Macrides describes the guiding paths, which later fell in decline in practice “Gone are the face to face encounter with the emperor with the people at the Hippodrome meetings, gone are the processions to the churches all over the city, gone are the labyrinthine processions within the palace, winding through numerous named rooms.”<sup>76</sup> This is not to say that the guiding practice disappeared as a used tactic. On the contrary it became less frequent, but more grand with new spectacles involving the Emperor emerged. The procedure of constant waiting was obligatory for Byzantine controlled client-states. A ruler of a client state by missing an audience with the emperor one risked being stripped of his titles or holding or having his rival neighbour being granted a boon, which would leave him at a disadvantage. Moreover failing to visit the emperor was looked down not only by the

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<sup>75</sup> Ten pat, 58-59.

<sup>76</sup> Ruth Macrides, “Ceremonies and the City: The Court in Fourteenth-Century Constantinople”. Kn. Jeroen Duindam, *“Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires”*. Netherlands: Brill, 2011, 217-235.

emperor, but also by his court, which in turn would ruin relations both with the current ruler and his heir. On the other hand, visiting the emperor too frequently was also not beneficial since one could end up in the dungeon by doing this.

The exchange of gifts during the visit was important. As Sheppard states that the visiting ruler or the envoy was a prisoner of this diplomatic game of gift exchange as he had to equate the gifts, which he was about to receive, with the ones he had brought from his place of origin.<sup>77</sup> The exchange of gifts can also be linked with economic power a ruler possesses. Therefore it also signalled the economic development of a given nation. If the gifts presented were of greater value than the ones received, the imperial coffers stood to gain and the visiting ruler was supposedly prospering. If the gifts were equal in value, the Byzantine Empire had stability and stood nothing to neither lose nor gain. If the gifts hold greater value on the emperor's part it could potentially signal either an economic downfall of a specific state or disrespect on the visitor's part. This in turn could be applicable to foreign envoys or rulers. It allowed the identification of potential new conquests or areas where Byzantines could involve themselves through, other than armed, means.<sup>78</sup> Regarding the gift exchange with Muslim rulers we can state that they and the Byzantine Emperors were locked in a 'luxurious rivalry'. As David Jacoby writes of exchanges of Byzantine and Muslim silk both of materialistic and artistic value. Each ruler, with the silks he was to present, attempted to outdo the other ruler ('<.> to exchange precious gifts, with which they attempted to impress and surpass their counterparts').<sup>79</sup>

As we turn to the twilight years (1204-1453) of Byzantium we can discuss the significance of religion (and gifts relating to it) in diplomatic practice and the importance of imperial envoys and embassies to foreign nations.

Religion was important throughout the whole history of Byzantium. In a sense it constituted their identity. As Peter Charanis quotes a Czech historian 'Byzantium molded the undisciplined tribes of Serbs, Bulgarians, Russians, Croats even, and made nations out of them; it gave them its religion and institutions, taught their princes how to govern, transmitted to them the very principles of civilization – writing and literature'.<sup>80</sup> Mark Lawrence, jokingly or not, in his book 'Vodkos imperija: alkoholis, valdžia ir politika Rusijoje' states that the Russian princes converted to the

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<sup>77</sup> Shepard, 64-65.

<sup>78</sup> Ten pat, 64-65.

<sup>79</sup> David Jacoby, "Silk Economics and Cross cultural artistic interaction: Byzantium, The Muslim World and the Christian West", *Dumbarton Oak Papers*, 58, 2008, 197-240.

<sup>80</sup> Peter Charanis, "Economic Factors in the Decline of the Byzantine Empire" *The Journal of Economic History*, 13(4), 1953, 412-424.

Orthodox faith solely because it allowed them to indulge in alcohol to their hearts content.<sup>81</sup> Saying that the Orthodox faith in Byzantium was solely a religion would be an understatement. In a sense Cyril and Methodius journey to Kiev and the subsequent creation of Cyrillic scripture was directly linked to the potential connection with religion and its spread. After the Kiev's conversion to the Orthodox faith and Russia following close behind, religion became a direct aspect of promoting Byzantine goals in the region through appointed prelates. It is worth mentioning that both Sheppard and Obolensky highlight the important role of the Patriarch of Byzantium in relations not only with Kiev and Russia, but also other converts in the Balkans. Religion in their understanding acted, contrary to the usual *divide et impera* logic and took as the divine unification of its followers. The Patriarch's powers were a direct continuation of the Basilus's power abroad. If Byzantium was threatened, the whole Orthodox faith was threatened. In Obolensky's essay on the ecclesial relations between Byzantium, Kiev and Russia we can see a clear confrontation over the matters of religion in the form of the appointment of local bishops. Both Russian and Kiev's rulers understood the importance the bishops have on their local populations and the perception of 'how things should be done' and sought to contest the appointed Byzantine bishops with their own. Even though specific treaties were signed highlighting the appointment of bishops other than Byzantine, we can say that much like a popular slogan in Las Vegas the same can be used here as 'the game was rigged from the start'. To be appointed as bishops in Kiev or Russia the nominated bishops, be it local or foreign had to be consecrated in Byzantium in the gathering of cardinals. As the Emperor Leo VI wrote in his novel that '<.>Canonical prescription preference must be accorded to the one which is 'more useful to the good order of things''.<sup>82</sup> Putting it in different words, the one who was more loyal to Byzantium or was most willing to follow the 'guidance' of the Byzantine Patriarch was to be chosen over other candidates no matter how pious. However there were examples of local bishops being appointed by local rulers without the consecration procedure, but they were not accepted widely and eventually had to seek consecration in Byzantium.

The gifting patterns remained the same even in the last period of Byzantium. The Empire, even when facing financial difficulties, still commissioned valuable silk to be made and given as gifts. The significance of silk garments was present since the time of Justinian I. David Jacoby notes 'Pieces of silk clothing were particularly favoured, since they allowed the conspicuous and mobile display of real or inflated social status in public'.<sup>83</sup> The religious aspect was also present in the gifts given. Since Byzantium was in urgent need for military assistance against the advancing Turks

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<sup>81</sup> Mark Lawrence Schrad, *"Vodkos imperija: alkoholis, valdžia ir politika Rusijoje"*, Vilnius: Briedis, 2016.

<sup>82</sup> Dimitri Obolensky, "Byzantium, Kiev and Moscow: A Study of Ecclesiastical Relations", *Dumbarton Oak Papers*, 11, 1957, 23-78.

<sup>83</sup> Jacoby, 239.

the unionist approach was taken towards the Church of Rome, much to the disagreement with the general population. A conclave of bishops prior have been discussing the unification of the Churches to no result due to, Byzantium putting up a facade of discussions when no true intention of a union was present. That is not to say that Byzantium was sabotaging the discussion. It was merely drawing closer to unification if it was in need of military assistance from the Christian west and drifted further from it once the circumstances changed. An example of gifts given to signal the unification of the Churches can be presented once more in the form of silk. Various silk embroideries have been made depicting the Byzantine emperor kneeling in front of a saint showing how humble the Emperor is. Moreover other silk embroideries show the emperor being guided by an angel to the gates of a catholic church.<sup>84</sup> This shows two key things: 1) The humbleness of the emperor with the need for church unification and; 2) demonstrates the richness of the empire and the emperor. Both of these aspects seem contradictory, but it is ironic how humbleness, in Byzantine understanding, is portrayed by showing humbleness by a picture while being sewn with golden weaves into a prestigious silk fabric.<sup>85</sup> Similar silks were commissioned in the rivalries between Nicea and Epiros after the sacking of Constantinople following the 4<sup>th</sup> Crusade. While both strived for a union with the Roman Church, the silks still had a subliminal message of Byzantine superiority ‘within the context of these rivalries, the imagery of silk portrays a union, but a close reading of the relationship between hagiographic and imperial scenes reveals and underlying message of Byzantine superiority’.<sup>86</sup>

The way diplomatic envoys were selected and how they carried out their duties is well noted in the PhD of Stavroula Andriopoulou. His entire work focuses on diplomatic communication of Byzantium in the late period up to 1453. One of the first striking images of Byzantine envoys to the west can be seen in Italian documents which regard the Byzantine guests not as ambassadors but as orators. This is due to the fact that most often they only conveyed oral messages to other rulers. Therefore the term of ambassador and orator regarding Byzantine diplomats can be used interchangeably. This is due to the fact that ‘orators’ often came to negotiate on the behalf of the Byzantine Emperor and not relay a single message.<sup>87</sup> Written answers were also present, but were mostly used by ‘lower rank’ envoys to deliver the emperors answer to other rulers, but which did not constitute a negotiation. Often such written answers were given to foreign envoys on their visit to Byzantium in order to save travel fees of sending their own diplomat with an answer. For

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<sup>84</sup> Cecily J. Hilsdale, “The imperial image at the End of the Exile: The Byzantine Embroidered Silk in Genoa at the Treaty of Nymphaoin” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 64, 2010, 151-199.

<sup>85</sup> Ten pat, 189.

<sup>86</sup> Ten pat, 197.

<sup>87</sup> Stavroula Andriopoulou, “Diplomatic communication between Byzantium and the West under the late Palaiologi (1354-1453)”, *Daktaro desertacija*, The University of Birmingham, 2010, 118.

example a Genoa envoy while visiting Byzantium and while getting ready to return to his home in Genoa would be given a written answer to relay to the Doge of Venice while travelling back. Such practice was common for Byzantines especially once sea travel became more affordable. However often Byzantine diplomats returned from diplomatic missions in the west in Venetian galleys since Venice was a popular stop on route from the West to Byzantium. The diplomatic mission, which was to negotiate a treaty, often consisted of a secular ambassador/orator and a religious figure. Such was the way of balancing the two spheres as both had equal importance in the Empire. The religious ambassador solely dealt with religious aspects of diplomacy such as returning bishops or taking part in the synod for the unification of the Christian and the Orthodox churches.

Based on Andriopoulou's work we can also distinguish the specific requirements for being a state diplomat in Byzantium. Of his researched period (1354 - 1453) 50 of the total 75 ambassadors sent to the west were of aristocratic decent, therefore we can conclude that having ties with the royal throne was a big bonus for the diplomat, it was not essential as the remaining 25 sent ambassadors show.<sup>88</sup> An additional boon for becoming a diplomat came in the form of held titles. Of the analyzed 75 ambassadors, 15 held military or civic titles, however holding a title was not a requirement.<sup>8990</sup> A similar situation is highlighted by Andriopoulou regarding the diplomat's relations with the Emperor. He shows that 30 of the 75 ambassadors were close relatives of the emperor.<sup>91</sup> Religion was an important factor in becoming a diplomat; however it served as a double edged sword for the diplomat. Catholic diplomats were prominent when dealing with the pope and when addressing the unification of the Churches, however once diplomatic activity of this nature ceased, such diplomat were not as used.<sup>92</sup> Nearing the end of the Byzantine state the ambassadors started to shift to more scholarly men, some going as far as Manuel Chrysoloras, being named 'the scholarly-ambassador.'<sup>93</sup> Moreover the number of related diplomats increases effectively showing how the title and job of a diplomat, is becoming a 'family tradition'.<sup>94</sup> It is essential to understand the basis on which potential diplomats were recruited as it shows the personalities of people when dealing with foreigners. As we can see, weak, un-ambitious people were not part of the diplomatic corp. Furthermore it served as a mirror into the empire and specifically, the emperor. When in negotiations, the diplomats could have enhanced the power of the Empire through their own perceived statures and the perception of others. Psychologically weak diplomats could not represent

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<sup>88</sup> Ten pat, 132.

<sup>89</sup> Ten pat, 138.

<sup>90</sup> Ten pat, 143.

<sup>91</sup> Ten pat, 151.

<sup>92</sup> Ten pat, 163.

<sup>93</sup> Ten pat, 165.

<sup>94</sup> Ten pat, 171.

a great power properly. In the next chapter we turn to how the Byzantines hid signs of decline through their diplomacy.

#### The ‘grand’ masking of the downfall of the Byzantine Empire

In this chapter we turn to how the Byzantines masked their veining power through various means. *A priori* we can state that the Byzantine state has never enjoyed the hegemonic power held by the US. It is also true that the Byzantine power, throughout its lifespan was not always in decline. At least it would seem to be the case during the reign of Justinian. On the other hand, his conquests can be labelled as the taking advantage of provided opportunities rather than sheer exertion of military force. Following the Luttwak’s line of thought militaristic power does not always, by default, have to be directly linked with state power. On the other hand, the Byzantines, in the militaristic field did not hold the views held by the Romans during their existence. Where Romans chose conquests, Byzantines chose diplomacy. That is one of the key differences signalling the Byzantine decline – it rarely indulged in aggressive expansion purely for the expansionistic tendency. At the time, the territorial expansion greatly contributed to the wealth a state could potentially have and exert. Considering the ‘ahead of its time’ tax collection methods, military conquest and subsequent taxation of the new lands would have and could have filled the imperial coffers even further, which in turn would allow either for further militaristic conquests or a ‘grand’ diplomacy. However its focus was on the maintenance of its own borders and ‘strategic expansion’ through diplomacy, which would enrich the empire. Paradoxically, as with Byzantium then as with countries and people now, the worse the condition they are in, the more they strive to promote the ‘everything is fine’ image. This is especially true in the case of Byzantium. The more territory the country lost, the grander the reception of foreign guests and foreign envoys became. This is very true when one looks at the twilight years of the empire. One would think that the shattered state would focus on consolidation and manage their funds with delicate care, but it is not the case, as have been shown, with Byzantium. The commissioning of expensive silk embroideries intensified in the last years of Byzantium.

This chapter will focus on showing the examples, how Byzantine diplomatic practices can be seen in the negative (declining) light. The aim is to view the previously discussed diplomatic practices as a ‘strategic withdrawal’ in terms of power. We can discuss topics as the reluctant usage of military contrasting it with the Roman counterpart, the diplomatic practices of making friends with the enemies of enemies, catering to the senses of people and abusing practices for the indirect benefit of the empire.



We can start off by stating that the Byzantine army was never the size of its predecessor the Roman Empire. Often Byzantium relied on its twin sister to help fight off enemies since Byzantium soldiers were highly valued. At other times it sought help from its allies conserving its own military power. The reluctance to use military force seems both sensible and logical, but it does not show power. The Roman strategy of forcefully seizing the last fort during the Jewish rebellion in Judea was a clear demonstration of force.<sup>95</sup> While Romans had the option of starving out their adversary they chose not to use it, since it would present the Romans as weak and relenting. Contrary, the Byzantines would never take up such a strategy since it would needlessly spend peoples' lives. The reluctance to spend manpower in war, for Byzantines, can also be linked to the requirements needed to become a soldier of the empire. Romans had legions and auxiliaries to fight its battles, which were well equipped and trained. The Byzantine soldier was as skilled and equipped if not better. The requirements developed from the need to be effective at fighting a plethora of enemies who used different arms. In other words, the training and equipping of soldiers for the empire was demanding in terms of population and expensive in terms of funds and the technological know-how to handle specific weapons. The loss of such a soldier on the battlefield would present the state with a greater monetary loss than the death of an adversary for the enemy. Contrasting the Roman Empire and Byzantium further, Byzantium did not have an elaborate network of forts which were present in the Roman Empire. For the Romans the threats emerged spontaneously and had to be dealt with as soon as possible, therefore the network of forts and deployment of troops was essential for the stability of the empire.<sup>96</sup> In the case of Byzantium, through their diplomatic network, the emergence of threats was known in advance and the construction and maintenance of the forts was unnecessary. Byzantine rulers and diplomats carefully watched the ambitions of its subjects since not only ambitious rulers presented a threat but also an opportunity. Bottom line the reluctance to use military means is sensible and logical, since it accounts to the time and expenses required to train a professional soldier. On the other hand it diminishes perceived power and in turn shows the diminishing power since if the state is reluctant to defend and solve problems itself, it can be easily subjugated. In the realist school of thought the diminishing military power directly corresponds with diminishing power overall. Following Luttwak's thought of grand strategies, it can be argued that Romans and Byzantines had different grand strategies, however it places them in the opposite ends of the spectrum, where one is advancing, conquering and solving pressing issues itself, and the other, reluctant to directly engage the threat, take up a defensive stance or relate to offshore balancing.

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<sup>95</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, 25.

<sup>96</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, 80-81.

Covert operation and subterfuge can be another field which signals the decline of power. Employment of subtlety to raise power is debatable. In a sense it helps avoid a larger disaster by assassinating a key person. On the other hand it removes the honour of facing the adversary in battle. It does not send a clear message of power to ones enemies and are often labelled as ‘petty tactics’. Failure to complete an assassination mission can backfire as we have seen in the case of the Byzantine attempt to assassinate Attila.<sup>97</sup> Employment of assassins to deal with the enemy diminishes the military’s power and prestige in the eyes of the people. On the other hand it relates to the calculation aspect of the success of the mission and the selective use of the military. In turn it is directly linked with the decline of power since the military cannot face the adversary head on. If we can link covert operations with the grand strategy it is definitely on the ‘power veining’ aspect, since if a state cannot directly balance the power of its rival it turns to different means, which assure its survival. On the strategic point of view, it serves as using appropriate means to reach the ends of survival; however the recruitment of assassins does not contribute to a direct increase in state power. While successful assassinations would increase the power and prestige of a guild of assassins, the same does not apply for the state, since once negotiations begin between countries, the other side would be forced into an agreement on the basis of personal security. Furthermore the employment of assassins only works if trying to balance a loosely held together force/state. If the outright killing of a ruler in a stable and ‘bound by the social contract’ state were to be used, it would not enhance the power which hired the assassin as the deceased ruler would be succeeded by his heir.

The cover aspect, in the case of Byzantium, was directly linked with diplomacy. Furthermore it was the radical decision since the ‘common diplomatic engagement logic’ would not amount to outright killing, since ‘today’s enemies are tomorrows friends’. The Byzantines had a complex network of diplomatic relations. Having a positive standing with neighbours is good, but in Byzantine case, it is only good if the neighbours can be exploited for their own gain. Whether having ones allies fight ones battles constitutes in the raise of power is debatable. It is true that fighting with allies, and having them, increases ones power, but it diminishes the local perception of a states power. Moreover overreliance on ones allies contributes to the same thing. The need for buffer states signals the incapability of defending ones territory through conventional means. Seeking stronger allies also signals the need for security through their provided defence. Befriending the enemy of the enemy and/or having them fight each other does not raise ones power directly. On the contrary in creates a sense of pride were there should be none since the conquest of

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<sup>97</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, *“The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire”*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009, 65.

both of the states, which are tired of war only results in territorial gain, while often such conquests were not even overtaken. The unbalance of strength makes conquest of such lands easy, but objectively does not increase ones power, disregarding the measurement of power between the three supposed states in question. Byzantium is guilty of all of these. Overreliance on allies, creation of satellite states and encouraging of competition between them did not increase Byzantium's power. In a sense it increased their bargaining leverage as the lands of vassals could be presented as a gift to buy off and halt a potential invasion. However the decreasing amount of satellite states directly correlates with the power held by Byzantium. This can be linked with offshore balancing in the sense of promulgated conflict among states. It allowed for the conservation of one's power while the other actors used theirs. While it would seem as an appropriate usage of "good diplomacy" it is not. Offshore balancing, in this case, was done against ones satellite-vassal states and not against powerful rivals. In this case, Byzantium was conserving its power while lesser ones, who did not threaten it, diminished theirs. Furthermore if offshore balancing between its own satellite states was done, it eventually would result in the diminished power of the Byzantine state itself. Placing them in the grand strategy again prepossesses them with the Romans. The key issue at hand is that the Romans also had alliances for fighting enemies, but they were the strongest of cobelligerents. Byzantium was part of alliances of which most of the time she was not the strongest one.

Religion in the case of Byzantium acted as a strengthening bond of the empire. It allowed the "subjugation" of the north eastern Slavs by enforcing the Orthodox religion upon them. The defensive nature of religion comes from the "only use when the opportunity presents itself" mentality. The Slavs, "lulled" by Byzantine charm succumbed to religion, but active missionary activities were never sent to the west. The conversion to the Orthodox faith relied on being charmed by Byzantium into converting to it. The conversion process was never proactive. Furthermore, religion cannot be counted as hard power. It did allow the making of alliances with states of the same faith easier, but it was never the catalyst. Religion for Byzantium can be correctly presented as soft power at the best and influence at the least.<sup>9899</sup> Its use was highly intertwined with diplomatic practices and militaristic boosts of morale through the carrying of icons into battle, otherwise the Byzantines with their Orthodox faith remained heretics to the Western Europeans and infidels to the east and south-east Muslims.

The diplomatic practices, in most cases radiate of defensive spirit. The practices artificially created the image of the Byzantine Empire as a prestigious, otherworldly and all powerful state.

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<sup>98</sup> Shepard, Franklin, 145 – 150.

<sup>99</sup> Dimitri Obolensky, "Byzantium, Kiev and Moscow: A Study of Ecclesiastical Relations", *Dumbarton Oak Papers*, 11, 1957,23-78.

That is not to conclude that, the diplomacy and its practices used are wrong, they merely relate to the “defensive aspect of good diplomacy”. It solely sought to establish its dominance through splendour rather than through conquest. The elaborate guidance through the imperial palace and the witnessing of imperial processions were to awe and charm the guests of the emperor. The display of Byzantine riches accomplished two things: 1) It did awe and “lull” the Byzantine neighbours, which encouraged friendly relations, but; 2) it showed the potential plunder for the adversaries if they were failed to succumb to Byzantine charm. While it is true that Constantinople had only fallen twice throughout its lifespan (To the crusaders in 1204 and to the Ottomans in 1453), the continuation of this diplomacy promoted both stability and strife in the Empire’s neighbours. Stability came in the creation of the satellite state network of vassals and tributaries, while strife through competition of the said vassals for imperial attention. The creation of a satellite state network and of blood-related alliances the empire sought to protect its borders first and to expand last. All of the diplomatic intrigues were done to preserve manpower of to further potential war. While it is true that it is the purpose of diplomacy to reduce the chances of war breaking out, it is for defensive purposes. In other words a country which seeks conquest and expansion does not seek peace in diplomacy.

The veining power of the Empire directly impacted the shown splendour, but not in a negative light. The tours through the palace became less frequent, but more grand. The processions through the city also increased in grandeur. It became the literal example to the idea of “when one is not doing well, one seeks to make others think all is well”. The processions with the Emperor at the head of them were equally targeted to the local population as well as to foreigners. Even in the twilight years of the Empire, the processions were still carried out, while the Ottoman soldiers were making their way to Constantinople.

One more example can be made with the linkage between diplomatic practice and how it was carried out. While the cross dressing and the allowing of speaking of oaths in the native tongue might seem insignificant, we can argue it is not. A strong power would not “stoop” to the level of its adversary to take up its colours in diplomatic exchanges. It shows that both powers are of equal stature whereas it should not be the case. Byzantines toned down their diplomatic practices, in this case, to appease its enemies. While it can be regarded as a peaceful gesture it does not show the power, on the contrary it shows the opposite – weakness, the will to comply with foreign demands. The same can be stated with the utterance of oaths in foreign tongue. This practice also shows the weakness of Byzantines as even oaths to Byzantium could be said on foreign languages, therefore reducing the significance to acknowledge the language and power of the state to which the oath is

being given. The practice of “stooping” to the level of the ally or enemy can be seen as a disgrace to the empire and show the lengths to which Byzantines went to secure peace for their state.

Lastly we can turn to the aspect of public diplomacy in the case of Byzantium. While the idea of public diplomacy is recent, Byzantines did engage in public diplomacy in the form of processions and parades aimed at both the local population and the guests who are visiting the city at the time. The portrayal of power to both groups serves well of masking the discrepancies in perceived and real power. The display deterred enemies due to the later and assured the population that “everything was well”. The unifying aspect of the processes and grandeur can be shown with the following quote “when in the last centuries of the Empire the importance of power politics declined, the less creative of diplomacy reappeared in Byzantium <.> cooperation gave way to division, unity to disintegration, reason to craftiness, moral principles to dexterity”.<sup>100</sup> Byzantines were inclined to keep stability through de-stabilizing means. Consequently the more stable Byzantium grew, the more unstable (in terms of varying diplomatic practices) it became. Byzantines needed to maintain constant disorder among its allies and buffer states, to temper their ambitions, balance their power in order to become stable in turn. We can see a clear linkage between the stability of the state and the importance and grandeur of processions for the state.

#### The French diplomatic practice

We can start our discussion with a statement that “France was one, if not the most powerful state of the 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> centuries”. The only rival it could have possessed was Great Britain. M. S. Anderson in “the rise of modern diplomacy” places both France and Great Britain, in terms of power, in leagues of their own.<sup>101</sup> The two states engaged one another in various forms often coming to a stalemate in relative power. Trade, diplomacy, colonial rule and military became fields of competition in which both excelled. France was often called to balance Great Britain and *vice versa*. Strangely we can ascribe the “maintenance of status quo” to France. It should not be understood that France was content with all events transpiring around its borders and overseas, however it relates more to the aspect balancing and competing with Great Britain for the riches of the world. Consequently, works on French foreign policy and diplomatic practice coupled with the descriptions of diplomats signal the maintenance of “status quo”. Even though the requirements and qualities of a “perfect/ideal diplomat” were more or less the same throughout Europe, even states as France, Austria or Great Britain followed such guidelines. However “Negotiating with the Princes” by D. Callieres was written and addressed specifically to the French kings. His quote “to

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<sup>100</sup> Tatiana V. Zanova, “Diplomatic Cultures: Comparing Russian and the West in terms of a “Modern Model of Diplomacy”, *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 2, 2007 1-23.

<sup>101</sup> M. S. Anderson, “The rise of modern diplomacy 1450 - 1919”, London: Longman, 1993.

understand the permanent use of negotiations, we must think of states of which Europe is composed as being joined by all kinds of necessary commerce, in such a way that they may be regarded as members of one Republic and that no considerable change can take place in any one of them without affecting the condition, or disturbing the peace, of all others”.<sup>102</sup> One cannot begin to wonder if such a view does not propagate the preservation of the ‘status quo’. Diplomatic guidelines, for the selection of diplomats, being ideal or not, still influence diplomacy and set the rules by which foreign policy can be done. For the latter reason it is important to analyze the guidelines of the ‘ideal diplomat’.

The key feature, prevalent throughout Callieres’ description of an ideal diplomat, is the idea of a diplomat to carry out his responsibilities to the best of his abilities, by constantly striving to serve his king as best as he can. All other aspects are described to better the diplomat’s performance in his service in the foreign nation. One of the first aspects ascribed to a good diplomat (De Callieres uses the term ‘Negotiator’) is the possession of a keen eye and sharp mind which ‘enables him to discover the thoughts of men and to know by the least moment of their countenances what passions are stirring within’.<sup>103</sup> Other qualities as high intellect (knowledge of history, geography and the political status and rituals of the receiving state) (not an academic one), dexterity of mind, knowledge of languages (German, Italian, Spanish and Latin) and dignity are also required.<sup>104</sup><sup>105</sup> De Callieres specifically mentions ‘the influence’ of the feminine charm and that the diplomat should utilise women displaying these traits.<sup>106</sup> Moreover the diplomat should possess an adequate amount of money, both personal and that which is provided, ‘which will largely assist in opening his road before him’<sup>107</sup>. This also relates to gift giving, but the intricacies of this art will be discussed later on. Furthermore courage, firmness of opinion and keeping of the word are necessary. According to De Callieres, a diplomat should never make a promise which he cannot keep.<sup>108</sup> These qualities are essential since they will adorn the diplomat with a mantle of prestige and trustworthiness, which in turn will trickle down to the represented sovereign.<sup>109</sup> It relates back to the before mentioned aspect of serving the represented king. The same applies to the whole diplomatic mission (‘a nation is judged by its ministers’).<sup>110</sup> Regarding noble birth, the diplomat

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<sup>102</sup> Monsieur De Callieres, *“On the manner of negotiating with princes, On the uses of Diplomacy, the choice of ministers and envoys, and the personal qualities necessary for success in missions abroad”* Paris: Mercure Glant, 1716, 16.

<sup>103</sup> Ten pat, 19.

<sup>104</sup> Ten pat, 41-42.

<sup>105</sup> Ten pat, 45.

<sup>106</sup> Ten pat, 23.

<sup>107</sup> Ten pat, 24.

<sup>108</sup> Ten pat, 31.

<sup>109</sup> Ten pat, 32.

<sup>110</sup> Ten pat, 30.

can belong to the nobility, but it is not compulsory. De Callieres warns of employing diplomats solely due to their status in the nobility, since great skills and attributes should be regarded higher than those of birth.<sup>111</sup> However we can argue, that in fact, good skills and attributes play a great role in a successful negotiation, De Callieres disregards the fact that noble birth and lineage inspire awe and due to that, solely furthers the negotiators power. On the other hand such an overlook might have been intentional on De Callieres part, since noble status might threaten and displease other diplomats which can lead to conflict. This in turn relates to the preservation of the status quo as ‘‘to not look to intimidating or elevated’’. Furthermore ‘‘the ambassador should be a man of peace; for in most cases, and certainly wherever the foreign court is inclined towards peace it is best to send a diplomatist who works by persuasion and is an adept at winning the good graces of those around him’’.<sup>112</sup> This also relates to the aspect of maintenance of the status quo. It would seem that the former is self explanatory; however the clear attribution of the ambassador as the man of peace sends a subliminal signal to the king to only consider men of adequate temper, who will not instigate war. Moreover the public denouncement of secret plots relates to the peace aspect. As De Callieres states that ‘‘a diplomat should be aware of the given plots, but not be a co-conspirator with them as it undermines true diplomacy’’.<sup>113</sup> This does not relate to the aspect of secret diplomacy, which by itself is not aggravating and functions more as a means of gathering information.<sup>114</sup> As a final point of note regarding De Callieres ideal diplomat’s guidelines, he points out ‘‘a prince who has no powerful enemies can easily impose tribute on all neighbouring Powers, but a prince whose aim is self-aggrandisement and who has powerful enemies must seek allies among the lesser states in order to increase those friendly to him; and if possible he should be able to prove his power by the benefits which an alliance with him can confer upon them’’.<sup>115</sup> We can deduce the idea that a short-sighted ruler will seek to subjugate his neighbours, but a grand one is made by having powerful by the enemies he has and seeks harmony with his neighbours.

One might state, that the ‘‘status quo’’ diplomacy changed after the French revolution took place, however the diplomatic practices endured its fires. Linda and Marsha Frey point out, that the diplomats of the revolutionaries were in a constant struggle with the old regime (*ancien regime*). Where they thought, they had taken up new practices, in fact were continuing the old, only ‘‘dressed in new colours’’. Most of the actions taken up by the ‘‘new’’ diplomats was a remaking of the old with a more ‘‘aggressive and insulting’’ behaviour. Take, for example, the illustration provided by Frey of a French revolutionary diplomat in Spain, planting a tree for liberty. Both Frey

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<sup>111</sup> Ten pat, 39.

<sup>112</sup> Ten pat, 55.

<sup>113</sup> Ten pat, 86.

<sup>114</sup> Ten pat, 87.

<sup>115</sup> Ten pat, 111.

and the nobles of Spain regarded that action as scandalous.<sup>116</sup> Moreover the designated purpose of the tree as ‘for liberty’ was a sign of an expansionistic policy. However the expansionistic was not in the sense of territorial gain, but the exportation of revolutionary ideals. Nonetheless we can regard it as a realization of a growing power’s ambition even though not in the traditional sense.

We can also link Linda’s and Marsha’s work with that of De Callieres in the sense of differencing countries by specific characteristic, however De Callieres separates states based on their size (power?) and according to Linda and Marsha the revolutionaries also did, based on the political regime. As Frey and Frey note that ‘During the war and until the constitution was put into effect, France would not send ministers plenipotentiary or ambassadors to foreign powers other than the United States and Switzerland. To others, France would send only secret agents, secretaries of legation, and charges d’affaires’.<sup>117</sup> The authors theorize that Revolutionary France only entered into diplomatic relations with other democratic republics. On the other hand we can state that the sending of spies to non-democratic nations was a means of defending and preserving the ideals of the revolution. On the other hand it allowed exporting the revolution’s ideas through subtle means. We can make two distinctions of such conduct: one of De Callieres which would constitute this practice as ‘un-diplomatic’ and; another of Byzantine, which would legitimise such conduct, but more as a mean of self-preservation and not of clear aggression. Moreover ‘French envoys distributed seditious propaganda, meddled in local affairs, or engaged in what one disgruntled diplomatic official termed ‘contemptuous intrigues’’.<sup>118</sup> Such action cannot be described as a clear violation of territorial sovereignty and only quasi-labelled as an extension of power, since if the revolution were to succeed in a foreign country, no clear indication of a favourable or supportive emerging regime are present.

The continuation of diplomatic practices can also be seen through the attire worn and symbols presented.<sup>119</sup><sup>120</sup> Both the attire and the symbols presented, at first glance, presented a denunciation of the *ancien regime*, however the practices remained the same. Diplomats still attended the meetings and brought presents even if with symbolic a symbolic undertone. Moreover the symbols were aimed more are promoting the revolution and not a political agenda. Take for instance the congress of Rasttat: ‘the French appalled the Austrian minister Metternich when they commissioned a tricolour flag in sugar, which they placed on top of a pyramid of biscuits.’<sup>121</sup> It is a

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<sup>116</sup> Linda Frey and Marsha Frey, “The reign of charlatans is over: the French revolutionary attack on diplomatic practice”, *Journal of Modern History*, 65, 1993, 706-744.

<sup>117</sup> Frey and Frey, 719.

<sup>118</sup> Ten pat, 719.

<sup>119</sup> Ten pat, 708.

<sup>120</sup> Ten pat, 731.

<sup>121</sup> Ten pat, 708.



clear indication of a promotion and self-aggrandisement of the revolution, not of territorial infringement. The same can be said about the French diplomat attire. Again, Metternich despised the look of French diplomats stating ‘‘what a pack of wretches, with their long, dirty black hair, coarse muddy shoes, great blue pantaloons, peasant handkerchiefs tied round the neck, and blue multicoloured vests. The crowning touch was provided by an enormous hat topped with a huge feather.’’<sup>122</sup> The clothes worn again promote revolutionary ideals, but still follow the maintenance of ‘‘status quo’’ in the political sphere. According to Frey and Frey ‘‘Diplomacy was part of the arena where the symbols and rituals of republicanism were tried, tested, and ultimately chosen’’.<sup>123</sup> If we understand diplomacy in the broader sense, in which, specific dressing patterns are part of diplomacy, the ‘‘revolutionary garments’’ constitute not a shift in policy, but in the means of policy conducted. Therefore we can return to the statement made by Linda and Marsha in the beginning that the ‘‘new diplomats’’ were still ‘‘dressing’’ in old regime colours. As Linda and Marsha sum up ‘‘the revolutionaries borrowed all forms of the old regime except the richness and magnificence’’ and conclude ‘‘the reign of the charlatans was over, but the charlatans of Bourbon France had been replaced by the charlatans of the new revolutionary order who engaged in much the same type of behaviour they had earlier denounced.’’<sup>124</sup><sup>125</sup> As I have stated previously, that the diplomatic arrangements differed, but the policy of maintaining the ‘‘status quo’’ remained unchanged.

The gift giving practice can be elaborated through the example of exchange of gifts between France and its maritime neighbours of Northern Africa. Christian Windler, in his essay ‘‘Tributes and Presents in Franco-Tunisian Diplomacy’’, describes the role of presents and gifts between the two states. Interestingly the French regarded gifts to Tunis as ‘‘necessary <.> from time to time, but not on fixed occasions <.> as a way to oblige Eastern peoples to revere and regard the power of Christian sovereigns’’.<sup>126</sup> On the other hand Tunisians viewed them in the form of tributes, but acknowledged the relations the gifting practice implored ‘‘the distinction between tributes and presents was not as obvious in practice as it may appear at first sight. The idea of tribute was inscribed in the structure of exchange: Maghreb princes expected presents from Christian rulers and interpreted them as tributes, but as counter-benefits they respected the navigation and commerce of the givers’ subjects, protected the nations or bodies of traders established under their rule, and

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<sup>122</sup> Ten pat, 731.

<sup>123</sup> Ten pat, 731.

<sup>124</sup> Ten pat, 738.

<sup>125</sup> Ten pat, 743.

<sup>126</sup> Christian Windler, ‘‘Tributes and presents in Franco-Tunisian diplomacy’’, *Journal of Early Modern History*, 3, 2000, 168 – 199.

offered them important customs privileges.”<sup>127</sup> In other words the French were gifting presents which showed of their power and technological advancement, but the Maghreb princes regarded them as tributes, but acted as been given a gift. As I have mentioned gifts were not only a portrayal of power, but also of technological advancement. This practice continued into the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, by gifting luxurious textiles, watches, pendulums, parade weapons and figured globes.<sup>128</sup> As stated previously by De Callieres that the diplomat should possess sufficient funds to fund himself and his gifts it directly relates to Windler’s insight that “courtiers could not earn a salary, gifts and counter-gifts constituted in early modern European court societies an essential mode for exercise of power”.<sup>129</sup> The diplomats should have been sufficiently rich to gift expensive gifts to compliment the power of their sovereign and also be able to maintain the diplomatic mission. Nevertheless, some presents were provided by the state as the diplomat had no means to acquire them. It is extremely prevalent in the revolutionary regime when militaristic aspects became part of gifts. The gifting of military supplies shows the state’s position of having so much power it was willing to gift it away. One such instance is recorded by Windler “the *Comite de Salut Public* in October 1795 allowed the consignment to Tunis of 20 000 cannonballs of various calibres and 30 000 pounds of gunpowder. Only half had to be paid by the bey’s commissioner; the rest was sent to Tunis as a gift.”<sup>130</sup> The Comite later stated that the sending of military supplies was not a sign of weakness on the receivers end, but the strength of the sender as the given supplies were not needed to a sender whose military status is secured.<sup>131</sup> This stance can be interpreted in two ways: 1) As a show of power to its neighbours (which in part was the goal of the revolutionary regime); and 2) As an armament of its allies for the protection of its interests and the maintenance of “status quo”. Nevertheless the practice of gift giving varied between the *ancien regime* and the revolutionary one; on the other hand, the portrayal of power was present in both despite the fact that the former’s gifts were acts of relationship building and assurance of commercial rights and the latter’s as an extension of its own power. After presenting the “middle ground” of diplomacy between “aggressive” and “defensive” diplomacy we can turn to the case of the United States; however before discussing its diplomatic practices we must understand the “orthodox” claim of the United States decline.

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<sup>127</sup> Windler, 172.

<sup>128</sup> Ten pat, 187.

<sup>129</sup> Ten pat, 171.

<sup>130</sup> Ten pat, 195.

<sup>131</sup> Ten pat, 195.

## Explaining the decline

Throughout the course of history there have been many great powers and empires; kings and emperors. Kings and emperors, who ruled over great swaths of land, themselves being maleficent, compassionate and great or ruthless, brutal and extra-ordinary ambitious, did not rule forever. As a fictional character in the Warcraft universe told his son, that “No King rules forever” later adding that “There must always be a King”. In the context of the fictional universe the king signalled order and stability, but without the king, the world would succumb to chaos. States, much like their human equivalents, also have a finite lifespan. Ones might be great for a century or more, others might enjoy their “great” or hegemonic status for only several years. Either way, states rise and fall, however neither their rise nor fall is dramatic and quick. One might argue that the twilight years of the Roman Empire came quickly after the Germanic tribes invaded the empire while it was being in the state of civil war for nearly half a century. A similar fate befell the various dynastic empires of China, which often fell apart during civil wars. Drawing up closer examples the decline of the British Empire, upon which the sun never set, was already happening in its golden years. However due to their exquisite political ability the empire was held together.

Before we dive in to the idea of how the United States is declining we must address the academic debate relating to the topic. Of the most prominent declinist theorist we can name Thomas L. Friedman and Michael Mandelbaum with their book “That used to be us: How America fell behind in the world it invented and how we can come back” and Fareed Zakaria with “The Post-American World”. Tom Engelhardt express similar views of declinism in his article in “The Nation”.<sup>132</sup> On the other side we have Michael Cox, who in the article “is the United States in decline – Again?”<sup>133</sup> Argues for the perseverance of the US despite “shifting realities and historical inevitability”. Paul Ratner also argues in favour of the US, briefly describing each of his points in the article in “Big Think”<sup>134</sup>, his basic premise is to address and refute the “common signs of decline” stating that even though US is undergoing changes, they are not necessarily bad ones. Joseph S. Nye Jr. also argues for American perseverance that even though US faces new problems which require a different approach, it does not necessarily mean a decline in the United States’ power.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Tom Engelhardt “Donald Trump might set a record – for the biggest decline of American Power in history”. New York, 2017. <<https://www.thenation.com/article/donald-trump-might-set-a-record-for-the-biggest-decline-of-american-power-in-history/>> [Accessed on 2018 05 06].

<sup>133</sup> Michael Cox, “Is The US In Decline – Again? An Essay”, *International Affairs*, 83(4), 2007, 643 – 653.

<sup>134</sup> Paul Ratner, “5 Reasons why America won’t collapse like the Roman Empire”. New York, 2017. <<http://bigthink.com/paul-ratner/5-reasons-why-america-will-not-fall-like-the-roman-empire>> [Accessed on 2018 05 06].

<sup>135</sup> Joseph S. Nye. Sr., “Twenty-First Century Will Not Be “Post-American” World”, *International Studies Quarterly*, 56(1), 2012, 215 - 217

Fareed Zakaria, in his book ‘‘The Post-American World’’ explains brilliantly the ‘‘different similarities’’ of the decline of the British Empire and the US. In his understanding, disregarding the military factor, only politics and economy are the holding forces of power for an empire. The British Empire and the US both have militaristic superiority over other states; therefore the factor is irrelevant when comparing the two. According to Zakaria the British Empire, having the political and economical component, was lacking in the latter, where as the United States are lacking in the former. In other words, Britain’s challenge was in economic terms, the US – in political.<sup>136</sup> ‘‘In 1820, when population and agriculture were the main determinants of GDP, France’s economy was larger than Britain’s. By the late 1870s, the United States had equalled Britain on most industrial measures and actually surpassed it by the early 1880s, as Germany would about fifteen years later. By World War I, the American economy was twice the size of Britain’s, and together France’s and Russia’s were larger as well. In 1860, Britain produced 53 percent of the world’s iron (then a sign of supreme industrial strength); in 1914, it made less than 10 percent.’’<sup>137</sup> As we can see from the quoted paragraph, the British Empire was an Empire only in the political sense. The economic aspect was long gone before the beginning of World War I. Even though Great Britain came out as a victor of World War I, the huge debts became a burden too much for the empire to bear. As Zakaria puts it ‘‘World War I cost over 40 billion dollars, and Britain, once the world’s leading creditor, had debts amounting 136 percent of domestic output afterwards’’.<sup>138</sup> The addition of 13 million new subjects and 1.8 million square miles of territory did not help to ease the financial burden. From a political stand point, Great Britain was standing strong, from an economic stand point, Great Britain was broken. Zakaria concludes with the statement ‘‘London played its weakening hand with impressive political skill’’, but ‘‘the fundamental point is that Britain was undone as a great power not because of bad politics but because of bad economics’’.<sup>139</sup><sup>140</sup>

The fate of economic decline does not seem to be plausible for the United States. Even though defence spending has been slightly reduced, it is still more than the next 14 country put together. US militaristic dominance is clear to all. Adding defence research and the scientific and technological advantages the US has, it becomes clear that the US military dominion is not going anywhere any time soon. ‘‘Failed’’ militaristic endeavours do not break the financial status of the US like it would do for other countries. According to Zakaria ‘‘the price tag for Iraq and Afghanistan together amounted to 125 billion dollars a year, which represents less than 1 percent of

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<sup>136</sup> Zakaria, 169.

<sup>137</sup> Zakaria, 174.

<sup>138</sup> Ten pat, 178.

<sup>139</sup> Ten pat, 180.

<sup>140</sup> Ten pat, 180.

the US GDP.’’<sup>141</sup> In a sense, the US economy sustains its militaristic dominance. It however fails to impact the political sphere of US. Failed endeavours in the Middle East cost more to the US in terms of prestige and international standing than in dollars. Moreover the economic position is also subject to change, not because that the US will lack behind, but that others will catch up.

As we have seen from the case of Great Britain, the decline of a great state does not happen overnight. It is a subtle ongoing process. It is unlikely that the decline of US would be any different. I would like to argue that we are currently witnessing it without understanding that we are witnessing it. In physics we have an understanding that matter does not come from anywhere and does not disappear into nothingness. The same principle applies to state power – militaristic, economic and political. If one or another part of it declines, someone has to be there whose power in the respective field increases. Rephrasing Zakaria, this is what is happening with the US. It is not losing its powers as itself. Others are catching up to the US maybe even surpassing it in specific fields of the economic or political spheres. This view avoids the deterministic path of the eventual decline of the US and its overthrow as the sole hegemony by others willing to take its place. It views the decline of the west and the US in particular with the rise ‘‘of the rest’’. In other words, the US will not collapse in on itself, but others will collectively rise to the level of the US. ‘‘According to the former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski the US has lost meta-power, the power to construct how others see the world: ‘the country’s capacity to mobilize, inspire, point in a shared direction and thus shape global realities has significantly declined’’<sup>142</sup>. A similar point is expressed by Joseph Nye:

‘‘after the collapse of the Cold War bipolarity, power in the global information age became distributed in a pattern that resembles a complex three-dimensional chess game. On the top of the chess board, military power is largely unipolar, and the United States is likely to retain primacy for quite some time. But on the middle chess board, economic power has been multipolar for more than a decade, with the United States, Europe, Japan and China as the major players, and others gaining importance. The bottom chess board is the realm of transnational relations that cross borders outside of government control. It includes non-state actors as diverse as bankers electronically transferring funds, terrorists transferring weapons, hackers threatening cyber security and threats such as pandemics and climate change. On this bottom board power is widely diffused and it makes no sense to speak of unipolarity, multipolarity or hegemony’’.<sup>143</sup>

Suffice to say, the US is losing the game in created in the first place. Other actors became proficient in the game that was supposed to be dominated by the US. Europe, China, Japan, India

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<sup>141</sup> Ten pat, 182.

<sup>142</sup> John Dumbrell, ‘‘American power: Crisis or Renewal’’, *POLITICS*, 30(S1), 2010, 15 - 23.

<sup>143</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Sr., ‘‘Twenty-First Century Will Not Be ‘‘Post-American’’ World’’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 56(1), 2012, 215 - 217.

became “as good at the game” as the US. China has explicitly stated that it does not seek to overturn the order created by the US since it benefits the Chinese interest. Namely China is one of the states which excel and expand in the international arena. The announced “One Road, One Belt” initiative and funding in Africa strengthen Chinese power in Asia and Africa. Ironically African countries withdrew their recognition of Taiwan for potential loans from China. Such a move is not uncommon in the international arena, but it was often used by the west or US, not by the “developing world”.

As Zakaria argued, that Americans see the world in absolute terms. “The best and biggest things have to be made in US or by the Americans” and “Americans may admire beauty, but they are truly dazzled by bigness”.<sup>144</sup> For a long time the US was first in almost anything, now however different states pop up in the “list of accomplishments”:

“The tallest building is now in Taipei, and it will soon be overtaken by one being built in Dubai. The world’s richest man is Mexican, and its largest publicly traded corporation is Chinese. The world’s biggest plane is built in Russia and Ukraine, its leading refinery is under construction in India, and its largest factories are all in China. By many measures, London is becoming the leading financial centre, and the United Arab Emirates is home to the most richly endowed investment fund. The world’s largest Ferris wheel is in Singapore. Its number one casino is not in Las Vegas but in Macao, which has also overtaken Vegas in annual gambling revenues. The biggest movie industry, in terms of both movies made and tickets sold, is Bollywood, not Hollywood. Even shopping, America’s greatest sporting activity has gone global. Of the top ten malls in the world, only one is in the United States, the biggest is in Beijing. Such lists are arbitrary, but it is striking that only ten years ago, America was at the top in many, if not most, of the categories.”<sup>145</sup>

While it can be stated, that such statistics, as Zakaria says, are redundant. However Gustave Le Bon in his book “*Psychologie des Foules*” argues that even though man is a rational being, he will be susceptible to abstracts and absolutisms when being part of a large group or crowd.<sup>146</sup> In other words, the presented statistics for an individual would not necessarily show the decline of the US, but when it is presented for a group, it instantly triggers emotions of failure and/or anger. Interestingly Le Bon also states that the group of individuals will not listen to reason if say, one member of the group would step up and try to explain the statistics. In other words, the vast majority of American people will feel that the US is in decline, by being shown statistics as these, which not necessarily point to a decline; however the damage will be done. Emotions of failure or anger will translate to demands for politicians to act in a specific matter, either to “Make America

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<sup>144</sup> Zakaria, 87.

<sup>145</sup> Ten pat, 3.

<sup>146</sup> Gustave Le Bon, “*Psychologie des Foules*”, Vilnius: Vaga, 2011, 14.

first” or limit the damage that is done. Refusing to comply with such demands could be equalled to political suicide. As Le Bon writes, that the crowd does not want reason or logic, it wants a leader which will reflect their wishes.<sup>147</sup> John Dumbrell argues that by rejecting American exceptionalism Barack Obama was the first “Post-American President”.<sup>148</sup> Similarly the election of Donald Trump has also been labelled as a direct outcome of the declinist trend, due to wanting to “Make America Great Again”.

We can summarise this brief overview in the following way: 1) Great States inevitably decline. Their downfall can be fast or slow; the reasons can be direct (military or economic failures) or perceived (politics). 2) The case of America’s decline is a peculiar one, since it comes in waves, but as the current declinism authors state that “this time it’s real”. While evading the trap of determinism, authors do not argue, that American will “crash and burn”, it will not even be overtaken. Other states are just narrowing the gap between themselves and the US. In other words, if others are gaining power, it must be at someone’s expense. Lastly the perceived “failures” of the state can aggravate the population and through them impact politics and decision makers. Putting it differently – perceived failures can be transformed to real failures if enough people believe them. All in all the aim of this brief overview was not to provide comprehensive data on how and why America is declining, but introduce to the concept and to set a base for the analysis on how the American contemporary diplomatic practice (influenced by the declinism trend) is similar to the Byzantine one. Should there be a need for comprehensive evidence on the decline of the United States of America, the limits of this paper would not be able to compile and interpret the data and would also derail the goal of the paper.

#### Diplomatic practice history of The United States of America

After discussing the diplomatic practice of Byzantium we must shift our focus to the contemporary United States. The US in its current standing has and is exerting power which cannot be rivalled by any other contemporary state. Its rise to power is a long one, which can be illustrated through the diplomatic history of the US. In turn, before we can begin to discuss the diplomatic practices we must understand the changes and the context in which it developed. In other words, we must first overview the history of the diplomatic engagements of the US since its formal conception in 1776. For this purpose we can turn to the text by Jack Zetkulić aimed to introduce newly hired diplomats to the diplomatic history of the US.

Zetkulić begins his text with the brief overview of the late colonial period (pre-1776) stating that before the Continental Congress was formed, trade relations were present, between the US and

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<sup>147</sup> Le Bon, 25.

<sup>148</sup> Dumbrell, 19.

the European states. Individual agents and business representatives were sent, but they did not enjoy the privileged status of a diplomat (or could even call themselves as such) since independence has yet to be declared.<sup>149</sup> Of these sent representatives one stands out, which was sent to London.<sup>150</sup> His name – Benjamin Franklin, who subsequently went on to be one of the first, well known representatives, (not a formal diplomat) of the Thirteen Colonies.<sup>151</sup> Following the events, the declaration of independence placed a newly born state in a collision course with the British Empire. Funds needed to be raised for the war effort, which was one of the aims of the representatives in Europe. Through deception Ben Franklin sought and obtained French help against the British, while subsequently John Adams travelled to Holland with the hopes to extract funds for the war. Both of the representatives succeeded in their missions and the war was over in 1781 with the signing of the Treaty of Paris. As Zatkulic states the period till the 20<sup>th</sup> century was more or less focused on the solving of internal problems through external means.<sup>152</sup> What does it mean? Representatives at the time engaged in activities which allowed for the expansion and growth of the United States. The question of the survival of the newly born state was also an issue which demanded the diplomats' attention.

The war of 1812 with Britain was one of the examples of attempted territorial expansion, however at its conclusion it did not provide any. Zatkulic provides 2 more examples of diplomatic activity at the time, describing one as the weakness of a newborn state and the overlapping differences of both policy and intended state philosophy. The example of weakness is illustrated through the encounter with the Berber pirates in the Mediterranean. Weakness in this sense comes from the dealing with the pirates. As Zatkulic notes, the US did not send in its navy to deal with the nuisance of pirates. On the contrary it did the exact opposite. The US paid of the pirates. The example of conflicting policy and philosophy is shown in the context of the Napoleonic wars. Haiti, at the time a French colony, succumbed to a slave rebellion. To quench the rebellion funds were needed, which were scarce due to the campaign in Europe. In an ideal world, the newly independent state should have provided recognition for others following its example. However the outcome was very different than the one which would have happened in an ideal world. James Monroe, a United States representative was sent to France not with the aim of securing recognition and independence to Haiti, but with the sack of money and the aim to purchase French Louisiana. Louisiana was of national importance since Napoleon harboured ambitions to use it as a base for his invasion in to the North American mainland. The selling of Louisiana was of interest to Napoleon since it: 1)

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<sup>149</sup> Geoffrey Wiseman, "Decisive characteristics of American diplomacy", *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 6, 2011, 235 – 259.

<sup>150</sup> Jack Zatkulic, "U.S. Diplomatic History in Brief – A Foreign Service Perspective", Adapted Lecture, 2005, 2.

<sup>151</sup> Wiseman, 239.

<sup>152</sup> Zatkulic, 4.



Provided funds to subdue the Haitian slave rebellion and; 2) Delayed the ambition which he did not have the time or the means to realise at the given moment. Both examples coincide with the above state goals of state expansion and security of the state.

The 1812 war was not the sole war the US engaged in before the outbreak of the Civil war. A war with United Mexico States ensued once the Republic of Texas was annexed.<sup>153</sup> The war itself was a direct realization of territorial expansion. On the other hand, the war had though the young state much both it diplomacy and in warfare. Quoting Zatkulic “Beware of free agents practicing diplomacy without a license. Have a plan to end a war before you start it, or at least have open lines of communication with your adversary. Rely on professionals. Ensure that diplomats and their military counterparts know and respect each other”.<sup>154</sup> Commodore Perry’s diplomacy towards Japan was a manifestation of expanding commercial interests.<sup>155</sup> Interestingly up to this point, we can see a rise of diplomats in the statue or military personnel.

Fast forwarding to the dawn of the civil war, the “US” diplomats had two tasks to accomplish: to outmanoeuvre the other side’s diplomats (both in official and covert actions) and; to avoid drawing any European state into the conflict. The southerners also had the aim to seek recognition of other states, whereas the northerners sought to prevent it. Zatklic provides an example of what the representative had to do at the time of civil war: “ [Charles Francis Adams] He engaged Pinkerton agents as well as more nefarious characters. He planted editorials and newspaper articles. He spread disinformation. He fought in courts of law to keep ships built in England from being delivered to those who would use them as blockade runners or worse. When necessary he supported the use of sabotage.”<sup>156</sup>

After the civil war had ended, the United States isolated itself from the world. The isolation lasted until the First World War. By the outbreak of the war the “special relationship” between the US and Great Britain has already been created. The catalyst of US return to the world can be labelled as the sinking of Lusitania. The debate on what Lusitania was carrying is not relevant, however the reaction which came about after the ship was sunk is of interest. Essentially the British had manipulated the US into joining the war. Before joining the US were reluctant to send troops to Europe and after it became inevitable, the US delayed as much as it could to send troops. After the

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<sup>153</sup> Ramon Alcaraz ed al., *“The other side: or, notes for the history of the war between Mexico and the United States”*, London: John Wiley, 1850.

<sup>154</sup> Zatkulic, 6.

<sup>155</sup> Walter Millis, *“Arms and men: a study in American military history”*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1981.

<sup>156</sup> Zatkulic, 7.

war, the US was baffled how it had been manipulated into joining the First World War.<sup>157</sup> Moreover Zatkulic notes one more transformation that occurred during and after the war. ‘‘During this period, a disconcerting and continuing trend began. Presidents began bypassing both the State Department and Congress in foreign policy. Special envoys were sent out beforehand <.> such channels of communication had the advantage of being direct, but they did not help build consensus within the government when it was often necessary’’<sup>158</sup>.

During the interwar period the US did not have much diplomatic activities. Due to the Wilson’s fiasco with the League of Nations only commercial expansion was of interest. The reluctance of the US to join any formal alliance during this period does not leave much to describe in the context of US diplomatic history. The neutrality of the US, similar to the one prior to World War I, would see its end in a most similar fashion as the one before it, which dragged a reluctant US to another World War.

To present the diplomacy of the US during both the second World War and the subsequent Cold War in brief would be to do injustice to the academics who wrote entire books analysing every different ‘‘nook and cranny’’ of both events. The meetings of the heads of state of USSR, US and Great Britain once the war was nearing its end are the symbolic events shared by everyone. Subsequent alliance blocks and creation of international organizations are what characterize the Cold War world. Needless to say, for diplomats in the US, this was a very busy time. The wars in the Cold War era, ‘‘shuttle diplomacy’’ and the collapse of USSR brought much work on the shoulders of US diplomats. However, time for respite was not given since after the Cold War US emerged with the mantle it did not want but took, that is of the superpower, ‘‘the policeman of the world’’.

After the end of the Cold War the United States could not turn to isolation and neutrality once more, since it harboured much of the aspirations of the people globally for ensured peace and stability. The establishment of international organizations like OSCE and various others with the aim to foster democracy and maintain peace (As the axiom goes – Democracies do not fight democracies) rested on the continuing involvement of the US with the world. Zatkulic termed it as ‘‘Preventive diplomacy’’.<sup>159</sup> With this onset, internal diplomatic arrangements shifted, with the White House and the Pentagon taking up a more active and influential role in foreign policy and diplomacy. The coming and going presidents each provide a different view on global politics and

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<sup>157</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind: A history of Propaganda*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003.

<sup>158</sup> Zatkulic, 9.

<sup>159</sup> Ten pat, 13.

diplomacy and it is therefore important to close this brief history of US diplomacy and shift to practices employed throughout its lifespan and how they relate to the declining aspect of the United States power.

#### Diplomatic practice of the US

The diplomatic practices are difficult to define, not due to being overly complex, but the majority of them vary on the time one is analysing and the president at the White house. It can be argued that even though the Obama's presidency favoured a multilateral approach to foreign policy, before bilateral engagement with other states was favoured and we can see the trend continuing with Trump's presidency. Multilateralism, in this context, refers more to diplomatic engagements than to military alliances. Geoffrey Wiseman makes a similar case for the favouring of bilateralism stating: 'in the Realist view, great powers are thought typically to engage in alliance formation, such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact, as an intrinsic part of global balance of power, and to engage with international organizations, such as the UN, only under very favourable terms, such as having permanent, veto-protected seat on the UN Security Council'.<sup>160</sup> The argument can also be furthered by acknowledging the network of alliances the US has in the South-Eastern Asia.<sup>161</sup> It supplements the idea of strong powers favouring direct engagement with states and avoiding multilateral dealings since the later constrain one with operating in a specific matter. If a state is powerful to act alone, it should pursue such dealings, since it frees up greater area of mobility. It can be argued that multilateralism provides a greater sway in diplomatic negotiations, but such assumptions hold true when countries band together to coerce a state, which they could not influence while on their own. Truly the United States has the capacity to engage any state on its own, now more than ever, however I would like to present a counter argument. If bilateral engagement favours strong states, then multilateralism must be seen as a weakness, or at the very least signal it. And while the aspect of multilateralism was present in US history it did not necessarily show weakness, at least not until Obama's presidency. We can take the example of Wilson's attempt at the League of Nations. While the idea of an institution to promote peace and democracy is a welcoming one, it 'asked too much' of the US and did not pass in the legislative branch. We can argue that the Congress did not see reason why the US should engage in a diplomatic arrangement which did not favour its stature. In other words, multilateral diplomacy was shut down since the US was got at 'going at it alone'. It directly relates to Wiseman's argument

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<sup>160</sup> Geoffrey Wiseman, "Decisive characteristics of American diplomacy", *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 6, 2011, 235 – 259.

<sup>161</sup> Amy Searight, "Chinese influence activities with U.S. allies and partners in southeast asia". Washington DC, 2018. <<https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinese-influence-activities-us-allies-and-partners-southeast-asia>> [Accessed on 2018 05 06].

above. Now take for example the Obama's approach to multilateralism. Following the Bush's approach towards bilateralism Obama, on the contrary, favoured multilateralism going so far as organizing high profile visits to the UN and receiving a warm welcome. The focus here is not on the Obama's presidency, not even on Bush's, but on Donald Trump's. If bilateralism flourished under Bush and does under Trump, multilateralism flourished under Obama and it therefore poses a question of why a sign of weakness did emerge (for two whole terms) in the US? Interestingly multilateralism was not allowed to flourish under Wilson. Here I would like to make a point, based on our previously discussed declinist theory, that Trump, as some scholars argue is a direct consequence of the decline of the US and/or a reaction to it.<sup>162</sup> We can add to the thought that seemingly after a period of weakness (Obama's presidency) a strong element emerged in the case of Trump's presidency while seemingly nothing has changed. On the contrary, if we see the US as in decline and Trump's election as "returning to strength" we can conclude that a façade is being brought in to mask the apparent decline. It also follows the popular axiom that "everyone would rather be seen as strong rather than weak."

A similar case can be made with the tendency to employ hard power to solve problems rather than to focus on soft power. Wiseman wrote "with the United States' growing sense of itself as a world power after the Second World War, grand strategy and foreign policy came to be based more on raw military and economic power and less on diplomatic skill and persuasion and a reliance on the United States' soft power of attraction."<sup>163</sup> He follows up with the statement that "during the Cold War era, the United States as superpower was often criticized for perceived proclivity to go to war – for example, in Vietnam, Panama and Grenada."<sup>164</sup> Needless to say, a similar approach was done by Bush's administration with the decision to go to war with Afghanistan and Iraq. Obama has also followed in this trend with the intervention to Libya and drone strikes against ISIL. While again a direct line of continuity can be seen on the surface Obama's wars differ since no ground troops were employed in both operations. Obama's wars are not wars in the popular understanding of the term. A case for selective engagement and offshore balancing can be made. One could argue that Obama turned to offshore balancing and allowed its allies to "carry the bulk" in the mission. It seeks to maintain its power through others expending theirs. Furthermore, as Zakaria stated prior, the United States might realize the shortening gap between power that it possesses and the one other states (China, India) have. It links with the previously discussed decline. While it is true that the military capabilities of the US have not

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<sup>162</sup> Tom Engelhardt "Donald Trump might set a record – for the biggest decline of American Power in history". New York, 2017. <<https://www.thenation.com/article/donald-trump-might-set-a-record-for-the-biggest-decline-of-american-power-in-history/>> [Accessed on 2018 05 06].

<sup>163</sup> Wiseman, 245.

<sup>164</sup> Ten pat, 245.

diminished, the “will” to deploy them seemingly has changed. Zakaria has previously stated that the military endeavours in Afghanistan amounted to around 1 percent of the national budget.<sup>165</sup> Therefore it could pose a question as to why the will to wage war has diminished. A similar argument can be presented with military bases. The network of military bases can be compared with outposts and forts in the Roman Empire. During the peak years of the Roman Empire the empire had a range of forts and outposts on its borders to safeguard the inner state. Moreover the forts acted as a culture point, since it: 1) Was the first thing people not from the Roman Empire would see and in a sense it provided introduction to the Roman way of life; 2) Acted as a deterrent to potential adversaries and; 3) Showed the citizens of Rome the strength of its soldiers. Luttwak makes this comparison with the US stating “Even today, certain precautionary deployments *in situ* are deemed to be necessary to contend with threats that are liable, if they emerge, to do so very rapidly. For example, even possessing airborne mobility at speeds of 600 m.p.h., the U.S. Department of Defence considers both Germany and South Korea too remote to permit the efficient device of allocating centrally located but “earmarked” forces. It is for this reason that American troops must be stationed in the theatre itself, with the resultant diseconomy of force, regardless of the obvious political functions that these deployments also serve”.<sup>166</sup> The US military bases serve a similar function as the Roman forts and outposts once did. The characteristic of the military base is part of the larger equation relating to the issue with the closing of military bases. During the end and after the Cold War regular closings of previous military bases and instalments are being done.<sup>167</sup> This begs the question of if everything is fine why military bases are being closed? Especially if the economy is doing well and the maintenance does not amount to a great expenditure. The common answer is for efficiency. On the other hand one should consider the possible impact the presence the military base has to the local population, to act as a deterrent and as a policy focusing point. It also allows the United States to project its power globally. Moreover, it impacts the local population, since it feels the “protection” of the US. One can raise the question: does the closing of military bases signal the withdrawal of US from a specific country and is a sign of US decline?

The favour of bilateralism over multilateralism is also present in the way the US engages with its adversaries. The policy of diplomatic isolation was employed against the Soviet Union, Cuba and North Korea to name but a few. Isolation in this case was the setting of preconditions

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<sup>165</sup> Zakaria, 174.

<sup>166</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, “*The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third*”, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976, 80-81.

<sup>167</sup> Eaglen Mackenzie, “Closing military bases will help our defence – and our communities” Washington. 2017. <<http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/the-military/344321-closing-old-military-bases-will-help-our-defense-and-our>> [Accessed on 2018 05 06].

before the United States would officially engage with a state. It allowed for the United States to directly balance the state power of others, by issuing demands for dialog. A shift did occur once Obama took office stating ‘‘who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society’s ills on the West know, that the United States will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist’’.<sup>168</sup> Once again, why would diplomatic engagement be used to coerce ‘‘lesser’’ states by the ‘‘bigger’’ one? Until Obama’s presidency isolation was employed by previous presidents, but since Obama’s presidency potential engagement is used. We can guess at this point, why engagement is selected. We can also argue that engagement allows to ‘‘set the soil’’ for potential offshore balancing. It would directly take ‘‘the blame’’ away from the US, while still allow it to balance other states through intermediaries. On the other hand, we could ask the question: why would the US be reluctant to be the one taking the blame? A possible answer is to look for cooperation points to allow the development of US to continue and not fall back while other states would be on the rise. We can argue that the US cannot afford to diplomatically isolate its adversaries due to the interconnectedness of the world and while once diplomatic isolation, by the US, was significant, currently we can see that it is not. Both North Korea and Iran are managing without the US through other states. These examples diminish the effectiveness of the isolation policy. While isolation might have been useful when US exerted unipolarity (it still does) the rise of countries like China and India and the potential to engage with them and not the US opens up different paths for countries diplomatically isolated by the US and therefore isolation becomes obsolete. In other words US loss of power due to the choice of engagement is not a direct one. If the US did chose to isolate a country, the isolated one still has other options besides the United States and therefore isolation does not seem to be so ‘‘hard hitting’’.

No complete overview would be done without the assessment of the people who are actually working as diplomats in the foreign office. Based on the US Department of the State, the selection of diplomats is a rigorous one. The potential diplomat first has to pick a career track from: Consular, Economic, Management and Political or Public Diplomacy spheres. Afterwards he must take the FSOT test and submit a personal narrative. Next are the oral assessment and medical and security clearances. Lastly, a potential diplomat has to pass the suitability review panel and only after it is his name placed in the register of diplomats.<sup>169</sup> The qualities needed to work as a diplomat have somewhat changed if compared to Byzantine or French requirements of diplomats. A Foreign Security Offices has to have leadership and analytical skills, be able to work in a stressful

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<sup>168</sup> Wiseman, 252.

<sup>169</sup> U.S. Department of State, ‘‘Steps to becoming a foreign service officer’’. Washington, 2015. <<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://careers.state.gov/work/foreign-service/officer/test-process/&sa=D&ust=1519318541884000&usg=AFQjCNGjJQBrAFirGZvhJA5LStRZqkguGw>> [Accessed on 2018 05 06].

environment, be flexible and understanding of foreign cultures and lastly, know one or more foreign languages.<sup>170</sup> An interesting aspect of the Foreign Service in regards to the US comes from a high percentile of diplomats who have been appointed due to their political affiliation. ‘‘Typically, the incoming president appoints senior officers of the foreign service (‘career’ appointees) to roughly 70 per cent of these positions (after a presidential election, all US ambassadors are required to submit letters of resignations, theoretically opening up nearly 190 ambassadorial vacancies)<sup>171</sup>, and persons from outside the foreign service (‘political’ appointees) to the other 30 percent’’.<sup>172</sup> Due to this, we can deduce that political affiliation, even though not a requirement is a bonus when striving for a diplomat’s career. Moreover, a career in the military can be labelled as bonus if considering a diplomats career. It ascribes to the similar idea of diplomat selection in the Byzantium. Through the selection process, and the individuals who get selected, the state is represented abroad which affect the perception of it by the other states. The US has a record of successful diplomats, who came from a military background (James R. Lilley, a Chinese-speaking former CIA officer who was appointed to China and Commodore Perry with his gunboat diplomacy are examples of these).<sup>173174</sup>

The religious aspect of diplomacy should also not be neglected. Religion has played a prominent role in the development of the United States. Quoting Zetkulic ‘‘After the Civil War, the absence of any external challenges, a growing population and unleashed economic might led to vast territorial and commercial expansion. Thanks to the Protestant work ethic, capitalist endeavour assumed almost religious authority. Ambition was sanctified, business was virtuous, and success was blessed by God’’<sup>175</sup> A similar quote can be taken from Andrew Preston’s book ‘‘Sword of the Spirit, Shield of the Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy’’: Popular religious pressure, let policy makers to ‘‘merge the moralism and progressivism of religion with the normally realist mindset of international politics’’. Underlying the moralism was a shared belief in ‘‘Protestant exceptionalism, which helped breed American exceptionalism and led to a shared belief in America as a chosen nation and in Americans as a chosen people.’’<sup>176</sup> We can see that religion played a prominent role in United States’ emergence both as a state and as a sole superpower. It helped set the mentality and the ambitions of the American people. The one area where the US can ‘‘step up’’ is its spreading of religion. While it might seem controversial religion helps rally people to ones

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<sup>170</sup> United States Diplomacy Center, ‘‘How do you become a diplomat?’’ Washington, 2015.

<<https://diplomacy.state.gov/discoverdiplomacy/diplomacy101/people/170366.htm>> [Accessed on 2018 05 06].

<sup>171</sup> Wiseman, 253.

<sup>172</sup> Ten pat, 253.

<sup>173</sup> Zetkulic, 6.

<sup>174</sup> Wiseman, 254.

<sup>175</sup> Zetkulic, 7.

<sup>176</sup> Andrew Preston, ‘‘Sword of the Spirit, Shield of the Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy’’. New York: Random House, 2012.

cause. It has been used for this cause before and is continued to be used since. We can take for example how Saudi Arabia is ‘‘exporting’’ wahhabism. It would allow for the US to balance the power in a ‘‘spiritual’’ aspect. We must also conclude that religion if not is by default power (the sway it holds on the faithful (soft power)), it is a part of it. To this end US can also fund religious activities abroad; however it faces a different problem on what religion to export. Protestantism might be the common answer, but various populations in the US would beg to differ. Moreover the ‘‘export’’ of religion might seem unreasonable, on the other hand the US is successful in exporting ideas, but as we have seen a great portion of the worldwide market has its portions re-distributed with Indian films on the rise and more people learning of different cultures, ideas and philosophies that the ones promoted by the US. To a certain extent, the military bases of the US serve/served this purpose.

Covert operations and intelligence gathering was, and still is, a part of diplomacy. Specifically regarding US we can talk about previous cases where diplomats engaged in, what would be labelled now as covert activity and intelligence gathering. Intelligence gathering is self explanatory. The diplomats collected intelligence once the need for information was expressed and the usefulness of it understood. Covert operations in this context refers both to subterfuge and ‘‘unofficial meetings’’. The subterfuge aspect is well described in the historical aspect in the previous section. We can take the example of US and Iran hosting discreet talks in the Swiss embassy.<sup>177</sup> Other examples include the secret talks of Nixon with China, John F. Kennedy and Khrushchev and Regan and Khomeini during the Iran-Contra affair.<sup>178</sup> Needless to say, secret communication is part of the US diplomatic practice as is to any other state. However due to the held power the US is able to conduct such meetings.

Last we can turn to the public diplomacy aspect of the US. Craig Hayden describes public diplomacy as ‘‘both a communication strategy and a foreign policy imperative that <.> seeks to amplify the global popularity of the president and the U.S’ foreign policy objectives’’.<sup>179</sup> With the advances in technology and communication, public diplomacy came to the spotlight. Its ability to reach great amounts of people allowed for both diplomacy and foreign policy to become more transparent and accessible to everyone. Furthermore it allows for one to garner support for ones policies both domestically and internationally. Due to this, public policy cannot be overlooked. It also furthers domestic issues and can impact elections since the local population can feel

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<sup>177</sup> Wiseman, 252.

<sup>178</sup> Karen Yarhi-Milo and George Yin, ‘‘Can you keep a secret? Reputation and secret diplomacy in world politics’’. Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, 2017.

<sup>179</sup> Craig Hayden, ‘‘Beyond the ‘‘Obama Effect’’: Refining the instruments of engagement through U.S. Public Diplomacy, *American Behavioral Scientist*, 55(6), 2011, 784-802.



international pressure to elect a candidate ‘‘the world wants’’. The later is very true in the case of the United States due to the power the US has at its disposal. President Obama was one of the first few, who recognized the importance of public diplomacy. His promise, as reported by the Washington post, to ‘‘make a speech once elected, in a Muslim majority country to signal that the US is not at war with Islam’’ captivated the sentiment of both the local population, which was tired of assuming the contrary and of Muslims abroad calling for the election of Barack Obama.<sup>180</sup> Proof of Obama’s know-how of public diplomacy is noted by Paulo Sotero who stated ‘‘that one picture of Obama and his wife, African Americans, holding hands with Joseph R. Biden Jr. and his wife was more than all of the hundreds of millions this administration has spent on public diplomacy’’.<sup>181</sup> Both of the given examples allow for foreigners to speculate on the aims of Obama’s foreign policy and the United States’ attitude to their country. Moreover it impacts and infatuates the local population, which in day to day communication relates to tourists of how good their president is. Moreover it can provide a point of unity for the local population to rally to and express a univocal response to specific decisions. Now we must turn to the comparison of diplomatic practices between the United States and the Byzantine Empire.

#### Comparison of diplomatic practices

In this last chapter we will see how the diplomatic practices of the Byzantine Empire and the United States’ compare to each other and will allow determining if we can establish a link on the defensive stance between them. We will compare the usage of the military, covert operations of diplomats, the building of alliances and their importance, the role of spreading ideas (and religion) and the emulation aspect of diplomacy.

As we can assume, the US and the Byzantine Empire, can and do, differ greatly when it comes to the deployment of military when solving problems which arise. As we have seen previously, the Byzantines were reluctant to commit troops to foreign endeavours and reserved them for the extreme cases if the empire was in jeopardy. On the other hand the Byzantines relied on and fairly successful in mitigating treats by diplomatically instigating them on its adversaries. Even if such a situation did arise where Byzantium had to deploy its troops, they were rarely the only ones fighting for the Byzantine side. A network of allies and their troops helped fend of enemies. In the case of the United States, we have seen the reluctance of not to use troops throughout its historical lifespan. Things did take a turn once Obama assumed office and the deployment of troops was reduced and the political will to commit them diminished. The seemingly painful lesson of Afghanistan and Iraq took its toll not on the military and on the troops (with due

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<sup>180</sup> Ten pat, 4.

<sup>181</sup> Ten pat, 5.

respect to the casualties suffered), but to the mindset of the heads of state. The public outcry against deploying troops did impact the decision making body. Consequently the US remains committed to come to the defence of its allies; however looking at the current trend one might begin to question as the assistance would come in “troops on the ground” or only in terms of technical assistance. This is not to signal that the US is incapable, but rather, due to the perceived decline, is conserving its military power and selectively engaging. We can argue that the US is beginning to apply the offshore balancing theory which would preserve its power. On the other hand, the Byzantines knew of their limited military capabilities and for that reason chose to favour diplomacy. The United States’ emphasis on diplomacy can be derived from the established understanding of “diplomacy over war” and due to psychological reasons of the perceived decline. Contrary to the later, the former can be refuted to a degree. The United States did not shy away from war in Iraq and Afghanistan after the events of 9/11. It can be further emphasised due to the United States going to the UN to sanction the invasion, which was refused and the US took it upon itself to wage war. While the axiom of diplomacy over war still holds true, it was not the case with the US and its involvement with the Middle East. In this context one can argue that the US clearly exerted its superpower force as it would be understood to do, considering the US is in a power position. What is interesting is why the exertion of power stopped even though the combat losses and the funds expended did not amount to much for the US. One could argue that the US succumbed to international pressure after Obama took over, but why did the international pressure rise and did not stop at the opening stages of the invasion to Iraq. Moreover why would the US succumb to pressure if the ones exerting the pressure were far weaker in military terms? I therefore conclude that the US is reluctant to wage wars in the same manner as Byzantium since it spends people’s lives which in the contemporary understanding are highly valued. Furthermore the approach for offshore balance would help the US to conserve its power and focus on internal stability, however the usage of offshore balance does not assure the preservation of peoples’ lives (in terms of human life) as it only saves the live of the stronger state, which is using offshore balancing. It also does not increase ones power and therefore refers to defensive diplomacy.

Now we can turn to the covert operation aspect of diplomacy. We can compare the nature of covert operation of the Byzantines and of the US. While the US did not plot a covert assassination it did engage in subterfuge throughout its lifespan. The sole similarity of both countries’ operations lies in the preventative nature of the operation. Byzantines sought to protect their state by assassinating Attila. The US both during the Civil War and in contemporary times sought the same outcome. The previous example of Charles Francis Adams illustrates the point of “diplomatically fighting” for the survival of his country. During the civil war the advocacy of the Union was

important as a formal diplomatic recognition of the Confederacy would have dramatically complicated the war effort as the war would have turned from a civil one to a war among states. While the seeking for support and aid is not something to be labelled as covert operation, the engagement with ‘‘nefarious characters’’ and sabotage is. The key difference between diplomatic engagement and covert operations is that one is of defensive nature, whereas the other - of offensive. Secret negotiations can also fall under this category as most of them are aimed at securing an advantage against a third party which is not part of the secret negotiations. This was the case with the secret negotiations with China for Nixon and for Reagan during the Iran – Contra affair. As seen previously the Nixon’s approach to China might not pose as an advantage for the US. Most of the things discussed related with the US support for specific policy while gaining nothing more than friendship, but not alliance. While it might seem unimportant, friendly relations between the US and China, could and did, impact the USSR stance. It gave the US the advantage of scaring the USSR. From the Iran – Contra affair, Reagan got an advantage of both saving the held hostages as well as supporting the Nicaraguan contras. It allowed him to save face while furthering the US interests, that is, if the affair was not made public. Similarly the Byzantines would have benefited greatly if the attempt at assassinating Attila succeeded. It would have provided a distinct advantage for the Byzantium if the Hun tribes became disorganized and scattered, opening potential possibilities of conquests (advantage). Interestingly both countries employed covert operations to further their goals, and while relates to the ‘‘good diplomacy’’ which would allow the countries to secure their survival; it does not increase their relative power.

Now we must address the issue of alliances. In both cases discussed the Alliances are of military nature and of defensive nature. The Byzantine satellite states can be considered as one group of allies, which though formally independent, were semi-dependant on Byzantium. The second group of allies of Byzantium are the ones, which could be understood as allies in the contemporary sense and not as dependencies. The difference between the two is that the semi-dependencies could have been given as spoils of war for the enemies and therefore served the ‘‘buffer state’’ role. They are also labelled as semi-dependencies because of the plots woven by Byzantium in their courts and against them. It is not secret that while subjected to the same overlord, in this case Byzantium, the buffer states fought amongst themselves and fought other states on their own or with their own allies. The buffer states were both a buffer to protect the core provinces of Byzantium from expansion and served as targets for expansion for Byzantium. Often the semi-dependencies’ wars had a Byzantine undertone, which would weaken the given states and allow of easy conquest. In other words the buffer states were living on the razors edge of being annexed by a foreign adversary or of their own overlord. A similar case can be made for the US and

its NATO allies. Even though the possibility of one of the NATO allies being annexed by the United States is unimaginable and can be refuted as complete nonsense, the aspect of the buffer state, as protecting core US territory, can be discussed. Ironic or not, several jokes have been circulating the internet of why confrontation between Russia and the US always takes place over Europe and never over Alaska – Eastern Siberia.<sup>182</sup> While Europe is a tempting land to conquer, it does have its own states, which are reluctant to be conquered by either side, which in turn makes the conquest more difficult. The temptation of conquest in Alaska – Eastern Siberia, on the other hand, is lower, but it would constitute a war between two countries. Therefore shouldn't the possible theatre of war be in the northern Pacific rather than over Europe? Returning to the buffering state aspect, it is true that each country in Europe has its own standing army, but simultaneously relies on the US for protection in the event of war. Similarly, the buffering aspect is reinforced by the election of Donald Trump. Trump has remarked on several occasions questioning the rationale of the United States' protection of Europe. One can argue that Trump is already applying the theory of offshore balancing. If confrontation between the US and Russia is irrational in the Alaska – Eastern Siberia frontier, Europe remains the potential theatre of war and its states act as buffer states. Therefore we can compare Europe as United States' buffer states and Byzantium's semi-dependencies. A striking similarity is that Byzantium was reluctant to commit its forces for the defence of its buffer states and used them more as allies in its military endeavours; the same is true if the US starts to stand by its doubts about the rationale to defend its NATO allies. Moreover the fact that the US has nuclear forces dislocated in Europe therefore making them a priority target in the event of a nuclear war breaking out. It is far better to reduce the possibility of a nuclear attack on one's own soil by providing more targets for a potential strike abroad.

We can also examine regular alliances, which aren't labelled as buffer states. For Byzantium allies accounted for stability and protection as well as military conquest. The stability aspect can relate to going into alliance with potential adversaries to discourage them from conquering any Byzantine land and diverting their forces elsewhere. To an extent the same is true with the US. While the US is the dominant power in military means and alliances mostly constitute stability to prevent others from fighting among each other (South East Asia). In a sense the alliances act as a containment of power, by binding everyone within the same alliance; it achieves the same outcome Byzantium sought of promoting stability. Moreover it limits the other countries' aspirations for any type of military endeavours that would later require the United States' involvement and promotes friendly relations between the states. Furthermore one can ask the unorthodox question if the US might be promoting stability since it knows it lacks political will to come to the defence of all of its

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<sup>182</sup> <https://me.me/i/russian-military-planes-fly-by-alaska-for-a-fourth-night-14416306>

allies. Furthermore, while stability as an admirable goal to strive to it does not constitute an increase in power. On the contrary it allows for others to develop while not focusing on security and eventually reach the level of power of the one guaranteeing stability.

Now we turn to the spread of religion and ideas. The Byzantine spread of religion allowed it to call its brothers of the same faith to its defence. It served as a rallying point on which a portion of stability for the Byzantine Empire was founded. Followers of the orthodox faith were inclined to help their brothers in time of need. In a sense it served as propaganda calling on the religious sentiment to defend the faith against heretics and heathens. The same is true with the United States' promotion of democracy. One could turn to pamphlets both given to the local population and distributed in occupied areas to 'lay down their arms' or join the fight against totalitarianism to protect democracy and freedom. In both cases the rallying point is of a similar nature – of ideas. Going even further the current US actions in the Middle East encouraged several local preachers to start calling for, and currently still do, the protection of Christianity and Christian values. While it is true that the religious aspect is of private individual origin, the pamphlets dropped were commissioned by the state.

Relating to the previous paragraph the emulation aspect of their norms is present both in the US and in the Byzantine Empire. We have previously seen the charm that the Byzantines went to gather allies to their cause. The royal practices to which guests were induced, the cross dressing and 'up-dressing' as kings captivated the hearts and minds of the Byzantine guests. Subsequently emulation of this sort occurred once the guests (especially rulers) returned to their home provinces. Emulation, in the case of Byzantium was also enhanced by the Byzantine perception of being more advanced and civilized than their counterparts. The customs of the court strove to induce feelings of insignificance and inferiority for their guests to awe them and in turn the guests wanted to mimic the recipient's way of life. It even had the potential to induce changes for the Muslims who saw Constantinople as 'an example of a well ordered city'.<sup>183</sup> The emulation of norms and the setting of an example also foster admiration for the given norms and, in turn, created a bond of mutual understanding which deterred thoughts of war or aggression towards, in this case, Byzantium. The same is true once we look at the impact the US soft power has on the world. The ideas of freedom of speech, freedom of thought and democracy have all been picked up with a few exceptions. The idea of 'Democracies don't fight democracies' promotes the idea that if one were to adopt democracy, ones stability and security would drastically increase. Furthermore looking the economic strength, it gives credibility to the promotion of free speech and freedom of thought as it furthers innovation. The emulation of these ideas allows states to impact the development patterns

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<sup>183</sup> Sheppard, 58-59.

of other states. Innovation especially is emulation worthy and has the biggest impact on development. A single invention nowadays has the possibility of impacting how a specific task is being done and eliminates or diminishes other patterns of accomplishing the said task, which therefore can impact how a state develops. The ability to impact development along specific lines is perhaps one of the greatest powers a state can have and in our case both the US and Byzantium exhibited such aspirations. The argument can be furthered stating that both India and China have started to focus on innovation and together with Russia adopted democracy as their governmental form. The latter signals the emulation of the United States' promoted norms. In turn the emulation of norms allows for dialog on equal footing which otherwise might be difficult and prone to misunderstandings. The aspect of emulation relates to the promotion of stability due to the adoption of wanted norms and ideas. As argued prior – stability does not transcribe into power gains, but does constitute as ‘good diplomacy’. At the very least it can be equated to the maintenance of the ‘status quo’.

Lastly we can turn to the aspect of public diplomacy of both discussed countries. The parades organized in Constantinople fall under the category of public diplomacy for the Byzantines. It allowed for the unification of the state through the perceived greatness of the Empire and awed the foreign guests. For the US public diplomacy is fairly new. While election campaigns are not a new development, the turn of the campaigns to inform foreigners of the candidate's ideas for diplomacy is recent. Furthermore the imagery of unity, while intended for the domestic audience can and does often translate to the international community. The previously discussed aspects of Obama's public diplomacy are a clear indication of this. Comparing the Byzantine public diplomacy with the United States' one, we can first turn to the US northern neighbour – Canada. While Canada is not a subject of the analysis of this paper, one cannot ignore the exemplary way of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Often labelled as the ‘rock-star’ of public diplomacy, Trudeau shows the exemplary way to do public diplomacy – through engagement with the youth (even using its slang), presenting himself as down to earth or explaining complex problems in an easy to understand manner. While such activities or the simplification of problems turns out for the better or for the worse remains to be seen, the appeal of the presentation is un-debatable. The same approach was attempted by Obama; however it was not attempted neither by George W. Bush nor Donald Trump. On the contrary Bush did not partake in public diplomacy at all, while Trump suffers severely from the over-simplification aspect. The Byzantine emperor, through his processions also engaged with the local population and the processions themselves had meaning (to demonstrate the faithfulness of the Emperor). Both Byzantium and the United States under Obama, and to greater (but unsuccessful) extent Trump engaged/engage in Public diplomacy, both

furthering or attempting to further the same goals of boosting their own stature and captivating foreigners. While not necessarily considered as a sign of decline, it does show the need for engagement with the world, in a sense be accountable to it, which does not translate gains in power if one is feeling pressured from the outside.

### Conclusions

Throughout the course of history, a great deal of states emerged, established a specific order and faded in to the annals of history. Some left more to the future generations than others. History provides a window through which one can look at the time that came before him and through the view of the window see, what states have left and how their heritage continues to this day in various ways and means. This paper attempted to do just that, provide a glimpse into the past, at the age of an empire, whose heritage is relevant today. The aim of the paper was to answer the question: Can the declining United States positions be explained through its diplomatic formats when comparing them to the Byzantine ones? The whole paper seeks to answer this question by providing a background of both the Byzantine Empire and the United States, their diplomatic practices and eventually comparing the two.

Before turning to the history of the Byzantine Empire we established a theoretical framework through which we can analyze the practices and the impact it had on the states power. The usage of said practices is of great importance since the usage of a particular practice conveys meaning and has an effect of the power of the state. We began with the discussion on the definition of diplomacy. Some have argued it only refers to negotiation and representation, for others even everyday interactions became part of diplomacy, while in practice diplomacy was both a combination of negotiation, representation and foreign policy. Negotiation and representation could not be understood without the diplomatic practices coinciding with them. The importance of diplomatic practice also relates to how power is reflected in diplomacy and is derived from them. Such insights would not be possible without cross-disciplinary research. The theory of classical realism helped us ground our concept of diplomacy. It provided an analytical framework to assess power and power balancing and the interaction between power and diplomacy. From classical realism two aspect of diplomacy were derived: "good diplomacy" and "bad" diplomacy, where "good diplomacy" refers to the appropriate use of foreign policy tools and the opposite for "bad diplomacy". For the paper we had to develop the concept of "defensive diplomacy" which in turn relates to "good diplomacy" but as an end result does not give the state more power and often works as the tool to help preserve the "status quo" at best or prevent (smooth) the decline at the least. The theory of offshore balancing also was used in the paper to help understand how power

balancing can be done without the expense of power by a given state. Furthermore it can be a direct consequence of “defensive diplomacy” since, as argued before, does not lead to power increases and only helps to conserve it.

After developing the key concepts we turned to the historical context of Byzantium, where we briefly overviewed its history, greatest conquests, strategy and eventual downfall. In turn, we discussed what diplomatic practices were employed in Byzantium ranging from gift giving and processions, to covert operations and elaborate schemes. The knowledge of the diplomatic practices was used to show how the diplomatic formats and practices used helped mask the declining positions of the Byzantine state. Next we sought to establish a “middle ground” on the nexus of “defensive” – “aggressive” diplomacy by looking the diplomatic practices of France. Next we turned to the theory of declinism and its relation with the United States. It showed the decline of United States’ power not in absolute, but in relative terms. Afterwards we turned to the history of diplomatic practices of the US and later – to the diplomatic practices themselves and how they allow altering the perceptions of others, to mask the declining positions of the US. We discussed practices ranging from the engagement of adversaries and allies, to hard power favouritism and covert operations.

Lastly we turned to the issue of comparing both Byzantine and the United States diplomatic formats in order to answer the question presented at the beginning of the paper. In order to tackle all aspects we compared: 1) The usage of military; 2) The usage of covert operations; 3) The nature of alliances; 4) The aspect of religion; 5) The emulation of ideas and practices; 6) The usage of public diplomacy.

Regarding the usage of military we concluded that the United States, just as Byzantium, is conserving its military power. We could witness this occurring through the policies of the Obama’s administration and the apparent “strong stand” of Trump. The usage of covert operations in both cases signals weakness of not being able to tackle the issues directly. When we turned to the alliance politics we saw that Byzantium used its allies and semi-dependencies as buffer states. In a similar sense this holds true to the US, if one applies the theory of offshore balancing. The aspect of religion, even if discussing the spread of ideas, in a sense pacifies followers of the same religion or the ones following similar ideals. While it does lead to power increases, in the long term it might act as area of conflict as followers of ideas need to be protected. The emulation of ideas and practices for both Byzantium and for the US works in a negative aspect. It promotes stability, during which other states might outgrow in power the state assuring stability (declinism) and also provides a blueprint for success for other states, which in turn allows them to develop faster (especially true



with technology). The aspect of public diplomacy, in this context, acts a promotion of ideas and practices. In both cases public diplomacy can be related to the reduction of pressure one might get after a certain decision is taken. For Byzantines public processions allowed and created the image of the emperor as almost divine in nature, whose authority should not be questioned. The same is true nowadays, as explanation of an undertaken decision helps reduce criticism and can allow to gather popularity and affection for the individual, which in turn allows for less pressure once an unpopular decision is taken (think ‘‘he knows what he is doing’’). It also contributes to the spread of ideas which promote stability, and as we have argued before, stability is not to be strived for if one is in a dominant position.

We can conclude with the answer to the proposed question ‘‘Can the declining United States positions be explained through its diplomatic formats when comparing them to the Byzantine ones?’’ with a ‘‘yes’’. Both countries show a similar pattern of engagement, which allows them to conserve their power. On the other hand the conservation of power promotes stability, which allows for other countries to consolidate their power as well. Moreover the promotion of stability might be as a facade of an apparent decline since the powerful state itself needs to recuperate. In other words, both states exhibit the previously discussed ‘‘defensive diplomacy’’ which we can argue masks their decline in order not to appear weak. We can also conclude that a single paper on the comparison of diplomatic practices is not enough to keep the discussion open and more work needs to be done in the field of comparison of diplomatic practices. As we can see the field of diplomatic studies is a broad one, and the importance to study diplomatic practices cannot be much clearer.

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## Summary

**The title of the Master's thesis** – Defensive diplomacy: The case of Byzantine diplomacy and the US. The Master's thesis analyzes the diplomatic practices and formats of Byzantium and the US and establishes a link between the two states showing how diplomatic practices and formats relate to state power and its position in the international arena.

**The problem of the thesis** – The Byzantine Empire, created after the division of the Roman Empire into the Western and Eastern portions in 395, lived on for 1100 years - most of the time without its twin sister in the west, which historically and strategically was in a position of strength. Most of the academics and researchers of Byzantine history, strategy and diplomacy describe it as “declining/defensive”. Lots of attention is being given to the formats and practices by which diplomacy was conducted and contributed to whole strategy of Byzantium.

From time to time, from scholarly men and futurists, we hear of the decline of the United States. Most of the works on the decline of states is done by the declinist school of thought. Often the theory of declinism is linked with disasters in the US and the fortunes of the others, of which the US citizens are jealous. Therefore we reach the conclusion that the US is in decline.

Drawing on both the declinist thought and the Byzantine “defensive diplomacy” strategy we can raise the question: Can the declining US positions be explained through its diplomatic formats when comparing them to the Byzantine ones?

**The problem of the research** – Can the diplomatic formats and practices be used to explain shifts power among similar cases?

**The object of the research** – Diplomacy, diplomatic formats and practices, their linkage to gains or losses of power.

**The goal of the thesis** – While using the diplomatic practices and formats of Byzantium, to show it's the linkage to the contemporary US diplomacy, which shows signs of weakness and decline.

**The tasks of the thesis:**

- 1) To establish a theoretical background for the thesis;
- 2) To briefly over view the history of the Byzantine Empire;
- 3) To show the diplomatic practices of Byzantium;
- 4) To explain how the fall of the Byzantine Empire was masked by their diplomatic practices;

- 5) To rethink the “declining/defensive diplomacy of France;
- 6) To explain declinism and its relation to the United States of America;
- 7) To examine the history of diplomatic practices of the US;
- 8) To show how the signs of decline were masked by the United States using its diplomatic practices;
- 9) To make a comparison of both Byzantine and US diplomatic formats.

**The main conclusions of the Master’s thesis:**

- 1) The US, similarly like Byzantium, in the context of the usage of military forces, is conserving its strength which does not translate to gains in power.
- 2) The usage of covert operations for diplomatic means adds to state power in the short term, but in the long term has the potential to negatively impact inter-state relations and the reputation of the state if their usage becomes frequent.
- 3) In the context of alliances Byzantium employed the discussed theory of offshore balancing; however it did not balance strong states, but only its small neighbours. The US on the other hand, is beginning to use offshore balancing the way it was meant to be. In this case, the balancing allows preserving the United States’ power, but does not allow it to raise and consolidate.
- 4) The aspect of religion, in both cases, even if thinking about the spread of norms and values for the US, works as a force multiplier; however it “pacifies” followers of the same religion (or norms) and creates the idea of demanded protection to which the state have to oblige, which in turn can lead to unwanted conflicts.
- 5) The emulation of practices and norms favours and promotes stability. In both cases (Byzantium and the US) it works against the states, since other state have the option of catching up with the great power.
- 6) Public diplomacy contributes to the promotion of ideas and introduces foreigners with specific foreign policy goals and aims. The usage of public diplomacy can be linked with resistance to pressure after an unfavourable decision is taken. It also contributes to before mentioned spread of ideas and norms which contribute to stability.

## Santrauka

**Magistro darbo pavadinimas** – Gynybinė diplomatija: Bizantijos ir JAV atvejai. Magistro darbas analizuoja Bizantijos ir Jungtinių Amerikos Valstijų diplomatijos praktikas ir formatus ir parodo sąsają tarp šių šalių per jų diplomatinių praktikų ir formatų naudojimą ir jų įtaką šalių galiai ir pozicijai tarptautinėje arenoje.

**Tyrimo problema.** Bizantijos imperija, susikūrusi po Romos imperijos padalinimo į Vakarų ir Rytų dalis, gyvavo 1100 metų – didžiąją laiko dalį be savo sesės dvynės vakaruose, kuri istoriškai ir strategiškai buvo geresnėje galios pozicijoje. Dauguma akademikų ir Bizantijos istorijos, strategijos ir diplomatijos tyrėjų Bizantijos diplomatiją apibūdina kaip „smunkančią/gynybinę“. Daug dėmesio skiriama diplomatijos formatams ir praktikoms kurios kūrė diplomatiją ir prisidėjo prie bendros Bizantijos strategijos.

Iš akademikų ir futurologų pasigirsta kalbų apie Jungtinių Valstijų nuosmukį. Visas nuosmukio teorijos dalis galima priskirti nuosmukio teorijos šalininkams. Dažnai nuosmukio teorija siejama su tragedijomis Jungtinėse Valstijose ir kitų šalių sėkme, dėl ko JAV piliečiai nesijaučia pilnaverčiai ir pavydi. Iš to kyla išvada, kad Jungtinės Valstijos patiria nuosmukį.

Remiantis nuosmukio teorija ir Bizantijos „gynybinės diplomatijos“ strategija galime kelti klausimą: Ar smunkančias JAV pozicijas galima paaiškinti per jos naudojamus diplomatijos formatus, juos lyginant su Bizantiškaisiais?

**Tyrimo klausimas:** Ar diplomatijos formatai ir praktikos gali būti naudojami paaiškinti galios pokyčius panašių šalių atvejais?

**Tyrimo objektas:** Diplomacija, diplomatijos formatai ir praktikos, jų įtaka galios kilimui ir praradimui.

**Tyrimo tikslas:** Naudojant Bizantijos diplomatijos formatus ir praktikas, parodyti jų ryšį su dabartine JAV diplomatija, kuri rodo silpnumo ir nuosmukio ženklus.

### **Tyrimo uždaviniai:**

- 1) Aprašyti teorinį, magistro darbo, kontekstą;
- 2) Trumpai apžvelgti Bizantijos istoriją;
- 3) Aprašyti Bizantijos diplomatijos praktikas;
- 4) Parodyti kaip Bizantija maskavo savo nuosmukį naudodama savo diplomatijos praktikas;



- 5) Permastyti „nuosmukio/gynybinę“ Prancūzijos diplomatiją;
- 6) Paaiškinti nuosmukio teoriją ir jos ryšį su Jungtinėmis Amerikos Valstijomis;
- 7) Apžvelgti JAV diplomatijos praktikų istoriją;
- 8) Parodyti kaip JAV maskuoja nuosmukio ženklus naudodama diplomatiją;
- 9) Padaryti Bizantijos ir JAV diplomatijos praktikų ir formatų palyginimą.

#### **Pagrindiniai tyrimo rezultatai:**

- 1) JAV, panašiai kaip Bizantija, karinių jėgų naudojimo kontekste, stengiasi taupyti savo jėgas, kas neišvirsta į galios augimą.
- 2) Slaptų operacijų naudojimas diplomatijos tikslams prisideda prie galios augimo trumpuoju periodu, bet ilgojoje perspektyvoje turi potencialo neigiamai paveikti tarpvalstybinius santykius ir valstybės reputaciją jei, jų naudojimas taps per daug dažnu.
- 3) Aljansų kontekste Bizantija naudojo anksčiau aptartą nuotolinio balansavimo teoriją, tačiau ji balansavo ne stiprias valstybe, o tik mažuosius savo kaimynus. Kita vertus JAV pradeda rodyti nuotolinio balansavimo teorijos taikymą taip, kaip tai numatė daryti teoretikai. Tokio tipo balansavimas leidžia Jungtinėms Valstijoms išsaugoti savo galia, bet neleidžia jei didėti ir konsoliduotis.
- 4) Religijos aspektas, abiejuose aptartuose atvejuose, net mąstant apie idėjų ir normų sklaidimą, veikia kaip galios daugiklis, tačiau jis „ramina“ religijos sekėjus (ir valstybes) ir sukuria iškreiptą reikalavimą apginti, kurio idėjų skleidėja turi paisyti, kas gali vesti prie įsitraukimo į nepageidaujamus konfliktus.
- 5) Praktikų ir normų atkartojimas ir imitavimas kurią stabilumą. Abiem atvejais (JAV ir Bizantijos) tai veikia jų nenaudai, kadangi kitos valstybės turi galimybę pasivyti didžiąją galią.
- 6) Viešoji diplomatija prisideda prie idėjų populiarinimo ir supažindina su užsienio politikos tikslais platesnę auditoriją. Jos naudojimas gali būti siejamas su atsparumu išorės spaudimui ir jo mažinimui, kai pasirenkama įgyvendinti nepopuliarų sprendimą. Viešoji diplomatija taip pat prisideda prie idėjų ir normų sklaidos, kurie prisideda prie stabilumo užtikrinimo.