

The Strategy of Heraclius

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The Muslim Conquest have received some quite valuable recent historical inquiry, yet the strategy of the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius, who reigned from 610 to 641, has received much less. The primary sources in Greek are very poor, and it is difficult to extract reliable conclusions from the non-Greek Christian and Muslim ones. It is nevertheless possible to make some observations. Modern military thinkers may make a tripartite classification of topics of military thought into strategy, military operations, and tactics, but such categories were alien to the Byzantines, who knew of such ones as strategy, tactics, stratagems, poliorcetics or the art of besieging a city, and naval warfare. It is inappropriate here to discuss the substantial Graeco-Roman corpus of military treatises and concepts that the Byzantines inherited, copied and adapted for their own purposes. There was no Byzantine grand strategy. There were collections of axioms, stratagems, narratives of significant military case histories, warnings, and miscellaneous reflections on warfare and craft and other bits of practical advice, none of which was really rigorously organized and developed, although they formed a substantial and unique corpus of military experiences.

Heraclius had acquainted himself with some unidentified Byzantine military manuals. These presumably included the so-called *Strategikon* of Maurice, which was written around A.D. 600. Byzantine military treatises have little to say about fighting the Arabs before the appearance of Islam. Byzantine writers possessed some clichés about fighting the Arabs. The Arabs cannot storm walls, according to Procopius of Caesarea. Evagrius Scholasticus states that it is better to use Arabs to fight Arabs. Heraclius's court historian Theophylact Simocatta, who was himself from Upper Egypt, speaks of the tendency of the Arabs to be unfaithful, namely, to switch from one side to the other. These clichés reinforced more general trends in Byzantine military thought. There was a Byzantine preference to avoid decisive combat on the battlefield, and instead the desire to use clever ruses and stratagems to defeat one's enemy without much bloodshed. Strategists counseled the use of timing, patience, and warfare of manoeuver and attrition, instead of head-on battle. Yet given the dearth of information in the military manuals about fighting the Arabs or about fighting in the regions where the Muslims invaded, there were few written precedents for warfare, strategy, or operations of the kind that were needed by the Byzantines in the 630s; at least there is no record of any such works having existed.

These tendencies reveal themselves in any close investigation of the activities of the Byzantines in their attempt to resist the Muslims. It is proper to speak of a strategy of Heraclius. Arab historians definitely attribute decision-making responsibility to Heraclius in all critical military matters concerning Byzantine resistance throughout the span of the Muslim conquest of Syria. Heraclius in fact was the first reigning Byzantine emperor to visit Syria since the fourth century. Although his knowledge of Syria was not exhaustive, he had visited key areas of it during his pilgrimage to Jerusalem in early 631. He had some familiarity with its terrain, climate, people, and communications. He was not far away in Constantinople during the key events of the conquest. Although he did not lead troops in person against the Muslims, he was continuously in Syria from 634 to 636, and even before that he had been able to maintain close communications while trying to settle ecclesiastical problems in northern Syria and his native Armenia. His bases of operations, first at Emesa or Hims, and then at Antioch, permitted him to remain in reasonably close contact with the battlefronts. He was not oblivious to the situation. The Muslim sources suggest, in fact, that he was relatively well informed about affairs and they may be right about this.

It is very erroneous to assume that the Muslim leadership was oblivious to the role of sophisticated military thinking. Indeed some Muslim sources, in particular Ibn 'Asakir, indicate a Muslim awareness of the Byzantine propensity to using clever machinations in warfare, and the need to try to avoid being caught by them. A basic strategy of Abu Bakr, according to Azdi, sought an opposite way to victory: seeking to cause the Byzantines to concentrate masses of troops, draw them into a pitched battle, and defeat them decisively. The Muslims wanted decisive battle, presumably because of their numerical superiority, familiarity with the terrain and climate, and their position. The Byzantine leadership did not wish it, except under special circumstances. There was, therefore an asymmetry in strategy and military operations of the two. Whatever the initial goals of the Muslims at the very beginning of their clashes with the Byzantines, their strategy quickly clarified while that of the Byzantine continued to be troubled with various dilemmas. Byzantine strategic perceptions may well have resulted from their own perceived numerical inferiority, as well as from their inheritance of such strategic thought, although in its turn it may have developed out of actual Graeco-Roman numerical inferiority on a number of past occasions.

Both antagonists sought to use military thinking to win. It is incorrect to assume that the Muslims were devoid of it. In addition to the use of rational order of battle as early as the battle of Mu'ta, according to the Arabic adaptation of Aelian's *Tactics*, other Muslim campaigning appears to indicate that rational, military calculation lay behind many moves. This

does not mean that everything went nearly according to Muslim planning, because it did not.

It is impossible to penetrate the mind of Heraclius himself. No military memoranda survive from his reign, although military manuals and memoranda on how to fight other enemies of the empire, such as Persia, apparently existed in some earlier periods of Roman and Byzantine history. No memoirs of his adviser or other relevant archival material survives. It is impossible to discover precisely how he reached military decisions. No Byzantine source provides such details. It is very doubtful that some reports in the *Kitab al-futuh* of Ibn A'tham al-Kufi about conversations of Heraclius with commanders of emissaries are accurate -- it is difficult to understand how Ibn A'tham or his sources could have learned such details. They are probably fanciful.

Byzantium had no general staff or war college for the formulation of military strategy. In all likelihood, it was Heraclius and his most immediate advisers, especially his brother Theodore, and a small group of generals who included Niketas, the son of the great Persian general and short but brief King Shahrbaraz (Niketas almost certainly is a Hellenic name adopted after his flight from Persia), who decided on Byzantine strategic plans and the general outlines of military operations. This probably took place in the presence of or in proximity to Heraclius himself, at Hims, and then at Antioch, both in Syria, not in distant Constantinople.

Muslim sources report that Heraclius first learned of the impending Muslim invasions when he was in Palestine. Heraclius probably made his pilgrimage to Jerusalem in March, 631, too early for the major Muslim invasions. Yet it is possible that he heard something of the Mu'ta, or reports of the restiveness of tribes who abutted tribes who were friendly with Byzantium. That is the only known visit of Heraclius to Jerusalem.

The reliable Christian Arab historian Eutychius reports that Heraclius was in Damascus at the time of the battle of Dathin, near Gaza, which took place in February, 634. It is conceivable that he could have visited Jerusalem during that trip that brought him to Damascus, but it is surprising that any such second visit to Jerusalem would have remained unattested. But the fact remains that at the moment of the great early victory of 'Amr ibn al-'As over the Byzantines near Gaza, Heraclius was not very far away at all. The reports of Muslim historians that Heraclius visited Damascus, Hims, and Antioch to organize resistance to the Muslims, and to appoint special military commanders over these cities, are plausible. The doubts that De Goeje voiced in 1864 against the *Tar'ikh futuh al-Sham* of Azdi are less persuasive today because of new corroborating evidence in Ibn A'tham al-Kufi and from a close examination of Byzantine texts that narrate events at the end of the 630s, in which there is more evidence for the appointment of emergency military commanders to direct resistance.

Muslim sources such as Azdi, Ibn 'Asakir, Ibn A'tham, and Kufan traditions of Sayf b. 'Umar, reported by Tabari, and later by Ibn al-Athir, indicate that from the beginning Heraclius was responsible for creating a basic strategy. That strategy involved a primary decision to avoid fighting the Muslims in the open countryside whenever possible, in order to wait for the arrival of the best Byzantine troops. Heraclius warned, according to the eighth-century Byzantine historian Nicephorus, Byzantine commanders to watch out for Arab ambushes, to avoid being ensnared in them.

Crucial to the success of Heraclius' strategy was reliance upon walled towns in the region. The inhabitants of each city were to close their gates and to prepare for struggle, and to obey the special commanders whom he was appointing from his army over each of them. They were to await relief from the crack forces that he was summoning from other parts of his empire. These new forces were to concentrate and then deliver the decisive blows against the Muslim invaders. According to some Muslim sources, Heraclius drew these forces from all regions of his empire, but especially from Christian Arab tribes, and from his fellow Armenians. The latter has served as the core of manpower for his recent victory over the Persians.

The initial Byzantine collision with Muslims at Mu'ta in 629 probably occurred while the Byzantines were reasserting their control in areas east of the Dead Sea after the withdrawal of the Persian army. This extension of Byzantine authority was also probably motivated by the desire to secure the area in order to insure that there would be no embarrassments for the Byzantine military while Heraclius made his impending pilgrimage to Jerusalem (which he reached on 21 March 631) by way of Damascus. Byzantine military goals at that time, that is, end of the 620s, were probably very limited and defensive. They happened to collide, in an area of a power vacuum, with Muslims who were beginning to penetrate north. The rumors of the massing of Byzantine troops at Mab or Areopolis, which Waqidi reports in his *Kitab al-Maghazi* for example, were in my opinion not part of any great Byzantine plan to strike at the Muslims. These may have been rumors deliberately floated - they were capable of doing that - to strike fear into tribes on the edge of Byzantine authority, while plans were being made for Heraclius to make his pilgrimage to Jerusalem and back via Damascus. There was no Byzantine grand strategy at that time, but there were limited security interests.

Initial Byzantine clashes occurred in areas of traditional Late Roman or Byzantine military strength--Mu'ta and Mab or Areopolis were important military staging points even back in the late fourth or early fifth century, according to the *Notitia Dignitatum*. There was no special strategy of any kind involved, except that at Mu'ta the important Byzantine source Theophanes already reports that the Byzantine commander the *vicarius*

Theodore has already learned of the impending Muslim attack from one of the Quraysh and planned a skilful and successful counterattack at the absolutely correct time and place. Mu'ta, then, involved a sophisticated Byzantine response. It was not a surprise encounter.

Muslim sources assert that Heraclius, and presumably his commanders, were not – contrary to what is often asserted in modern histories – uninformed about the possibility of Muslim invasions. According to them, he did learn of this and made every reasonable effort to disseminate the news of this impending attack, and encourage local inhabitants to resist. The Byzantine military reaction was not, according to this tradition, a completely *ad hoc* one. There was not a lot of time to prepare to resist the Muslims, but there was some time. In such conditions, there was at least time for Heraclius' known visit to Jerusalem, and his several visits to Damascus, of which there were at least three, and the plausibility of other material about Byzantium and local conditions in those same sources, leads to a reappraisal that gives more credibility than has usually been accorded, to some of those sources, including some important traditions from Kufa that find some corroboration in the scanty but more contemporary Christian sources.

It is uncertain how early Heraclius became involved in Byzantine strategy against the Muslims. It appears that by sometimes in February, 634, he had become involved. He does not appear to have been personally familiar with terrain and conditions in southern Palestine and land east of the 'Arabah and the Dead sea. He appointed his brother Theodore to command Byzantine troops raised early in 634 after the battle of Dathin. Through his brother Theodore Heraclius became and remained familiar with military conditions at the front. He himself was never too far from the scene of battle, because his base was at Hims and then Antioch. Appointment of his brother also, of course, gave Heraclius very effective and reliable delegation of command of his army, which insured as far as possible the implementation of military operations in conformity with his own wishes and general strategic guidelines.

Many military experiences probably contributed to the formation of Heraclius' approaches to strategic and operational thinking. He had been almost continuously engaged in war against Persia between 610 and 628. His own unsuccessful efforts to create an effective defense of northern Syria, especially the region around Antioch, in 613 probably left a strong impression on him. At that time he gained an appreciation of roads and the significance of mountain passes in the Taurus range, and the various choke-points that a commander could use to block the advance of an enemy. His cousin Niketas may have explained to him operational problems of trying to bring military forces from Byzantine Egypt, as he had tried to do in 613-614, to the defense of Palestine and Syria. His efforts had failed to

halt the Persians. Even more obscure yet potentially more important for future conflict was the unsuccessful Byzantine effort to stem the Persian advance on Palestine in the area of Syria or Arabia between Adhri'at (Deraa today) and Bostra (modern Busra). The Byzantines lost a major battle there in 614, thereby opening the way for the Persians to penetrate into Palestine, as far as Jerusalem, which fell later in 614. No details are known of this battle, except Tabari reports that it was this battle to which *Sura 30* of the *Qur'an* refers.

Byzantinists and Arabists have equally ignored this battle. It was important because it sealed the fate of the Byzantines in 614, but it also permitted Byzantines, Persians, and presumably various Arab contemporaries to comprehend the strategic importance of the region of Adhri'at, and to calculate the kinds of tactical options that might be available to a defender or an attacker there. The area was another critical choke point, or nodal point, about which many living military minds had reflected extensively in 614. Some of these presumably were still alive in the 630s, and had drawn many conclusions about the virtues and failings of various manoeuvres and strong points and tactics at Adhri'at. It is also significant that Heraclius' armies drew on the military experience of another Niketas, the son of the Persian General Shahrbaraz, who had commanded that victorious Persian army at Adhri'at. in 613-614.

It is impossible to know how much Byzantine military thinking and operations drew on the Persian experiences from their campaign in 614, but their positions were superficially comparable in many ways. It is impossible to know how much advice Shahrbaraz had imparted to his son Niketas, for Shahrbaraz had perished in Persia in 630. There are a number of ironies in this. Yet presumably many Arabs had learned something of the positions of both Persian and Byzantine armies in 614 around Adhri'at and Bostra, and had drawn conclusions about how the son of Shahrbaraz might try to repeat actions and manoeuvres of his victorious father in the same region. The sources are simply lacking to permit any serious inquiry, but these points deserve to be remembered. Recent military history invariably created part of the memories that helped to shape military decisions of the Byzantine -- and probably the Muslims as well -- in the 630s. These experiences have been completely neglected in scholarly assessments of strategic and tactical calculations about the battle of the Yarmuk, yet the antagonists probably calculated and acted in terms of the most recent military experiences that had taken place over much of the same terrain a few decades earlier.

Heraclius had previously employed a decisive strategy against the Persians. He personally commanded the Byzantine forces that brought the war into the heart of the Persian Empire. He did not employ such a strategy against the Muslims. There is every indication that he and his subordinate

commanders never had the confidence in fighting the Muslims that they once had, despite enormous odds against them, in fighting the Persians. Both Christian, including Greek and Christian Oriental histories, and Muslim sources appear to agree on that point.

Heraclius' strategy against the Muslims did not remain constant throughout the 630s. What did remain constant, however, was a preference to rely upon Palestine Byzantine military superiority when occupying strong fixed positions, whether fortified lines or walled towns. There was a disinclination to try to manoeuvre in the open countryside, whether or not on the edge of desert country. This tendency to use walled towns as strongpoints had merit if one assumed that the Arabs were incapable of attacking walled towns successfully. But it reinforced the propensity of Byzantine soldiers to prefer the softer life of towns to the risks and rigors of conditions in the countryside. It increased hardships for townspeople, with whom soldiers competed for lodging and provisions. It dispersed the Byzantine military strength and implicitly conceded the initiative, mobility, and the countryside to the Muslims. This tendency accelerated after the Byzantine defeats at Dathin in February 634 and Ajnadayn in late July 634.

Another dangerous assumption on the part of Heraclius, according to Tabari, was his confidence in the unfamiliarity of Arabs with the harshness of the winter in Syria, and their resulting alleged military vulnerability in cold weather. No Byzantine text attributes this observation to Heraclius, although a late military manual (*Tactica* of Emperor Leo VI who wrote it ca. 900) also advises Byzantine commanders to attack Arabs in the winter, because of their dislike of the cold. The question is whether this remark of Heraclius is in fact an anachronism, one appropriate to later warfare in the harsher winter conditions of the Anatolian plateau and its mountains, rather than Syria in the reign of Heraclius. The question cannot be definitively resolved at this time.

Whether or not on Heraclius' explicit orders, local Byzantine commanders from the beginning of contact with the Muslims, at Dathin, preferred to talk-fight, fight-talk, instead of engaging in continuous warfare. These respites provided potential opportunities for the Byzantines to develop ruses, to learn more about their opponents, and to try to divide, mislead, and break up their enemy by a number of measures. That type of warfare suited the temperament of Byzantine commanders rather well. Although one may reasonably doubt the authenticity of the Arabic historians' narratives of various verbal exchanges between Byzantine and Muslim before or during battle, the reality probably included some communications and even face-to-face meetings of commanders, or at least their emissaries at various points, and not merely for the discussion of terms of surrender. These were typical Byzantine methods of warfare. Such

parleys had been used to capture the Ghassanid chief al-Mundhir in the late sixth century, and it is perfectly credible that Byzantine commanders attempted to repeat them against Muslim commanders, such as the effort reported by Eutychius of the commander of Gaza who tried to capture 'Amr ibn al-'As and other Muslim commanders at a face-to-face conference. It was a form of decapitation. Removal of the Muslim leadership by such means would have been preferable to a bloody contest on the battlefield in a period of scarce military manpower.

Extant Byzantine sources are careful not to criticize the strategic advice of Heraclius. If anything, Heraclius is represented as having given wide advice to his commanders, which they unwisely disregarded. Byzantine defeats result from not following Heraclius' advice, or from other external factors, such as bad weather (the storm that blew into Byzantine faces at the battle of the Yarmuk), or the bad actions of other ethnic groups, such as the Armenian soldiers who allegedly mutinied at the Yarmuk, which is not mentioned in any Muslim source although they do speak of soldiers' indiscipline and plundering of Syrian civilians. Perhaps it was in conformity with the old guidelines of the rhetoricians for describing the military leadership of generals (one thinks of Menander Rhetor's second tract, for example) — in particular for describing how the emperor should receive praise for discerning avoiding the ambushes of the enemy — that Heraclius is so described in the very few Byzantine accounts that survive. The Byzantines, who were probably forming their traditions about the events of the conquest while other descendants of Heraclius reigned at Constantinople, did not wish to smear the reputation of the founder of their ruling dynasty. They were probably deliberately avoiding any remarks that might call into question the excellence of Heraclius' military leadership, including his strategic ideas and advice on military operations. There is evidence that Heraclius was very interested in astronomy and astrology. It is less clear whether these heavenly interests affected his choice of strategy and his direction of military operations.

Byzantine sources are careful to dissociate Heraclius from the disaster of the battle of the Yarmuk. It is he who sent General Vahan with troops to counterattack and, with initial success, drive the Muslims out of Hims and Damascus. In fact there is no evidence that Heraclius could have directed the particular manoeuvres of the Byzantine army at the battle of the Yarmuk.

The Byzantine armies initially disintegrated after the battle of the Yarmuk on 20 August 636. That debacle appears to have reached a climax when the Muslims caught up with the fleeing core of Byzantines near Hims and utterly destroyed their effectiveness as a fighting force. There was a Byzantine flight in every direction, and an astute Muslim mopping-up. The Muslims did exploit a breakthrough at that time.

There was strategic rationality -- hitherto neglected -- to the last moments of Byzantine military presence in Syria, however. Eutychius, who is a rather reliable Christian Arab source, reports a truce at Chalkis/Qinnasrin, which probably took place between early 637 and early 638, for one year. This was a rational place for the Byzantines to ask for such a truce. The ostensible reason was to allow local people who wished to leave to have time to evacuate in an orderly manner. The Byzantines paid tribute for this peace. But this truce gave the Byzantines, as did the ensuing one for a year for Mesopotamia, a valuable time of respite to regroup, raise more troops, revive fatigued and battered soldiers, rethink strategy, and create fortresses and obstacles against any future Muslim advance. Chalkis/Qinnasrin was the place to ask for such a peace, because it dominated east-west and north-south road systems. As a vital crossroads, it protected the remaining rich and populous area of northern Syria. Once it was lost; other positions were dangerously exposed, if not cut off.

This truce, however humiliating, was another example of the Byzantine desire to talk-fight, fight-talk. It gave them time to rethink matters, desperately regroup, while always vainly hoping that the Muslims would somehow fall into dissension and become vulnerable to some Byzantine stratagem. There was always the theoretical possibility of a Byzantine resumption of hostilities. There was strategic sense to this truce, which was probably partially responsible for the survival of Byzantine Anatolia. The truce suited the Byzantines for many reasons. Strategy for the Byzantines did not exclusively involve warfare, but also diplomacy, espionage, dissemination of false information, and resort to ruses. It was a strategically intelligent place to try to make the Muslims halt. It temporarily, at a very vulnerable moment for the Byzantines, removed the chance for a Muslim breakthrough. Careful comparative study of events in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Chalkis indicates that there was a truce there. It gave the Muslims a chance to receive much financial gain as well as to consolidate their very considerable territorial gains thus far, so it was not a stupid agreement for them to have accepted. It was risky to continue full pursuit at that time.

In none of these last moments of Byzantine Syria was Heraclius incompetent or inactive. He was the inspiration of a spirited defense. He did plan various strategic lines of secondary defense. These withdrawals and redeployments were rational ones, even if not glorious. It was a difficult matter to reorganize some semblance of a defensive line after the earlier shattering blows that the Byzantines had received. Yet Heraclius managed to do this. He did not save Syria for the Byzantines, or even Upper Mesopotamia, but he did help to save Byzantine Anatolia by these neglected herculean efforts at the end of the 630s. He did not regard everything as lost. These were strategic withdrawals, which were admirably handled under the difficult circumstances.

The reports in the Syriac historian Michael the Syrian that Heraclius urged all commanders to hold on to what they could as posts, but not to fight the Arabs in the open, was a rational strategy in the circumstances. But it was doomed to ultimate failure, because the Muslims learned to reduce towns, and where necessary (as at Baalbek, as one learns from the treaty that Baladhuri preserves) to prevent suspicious parties from continuing to inhabit towns where they might lock out the Muslims and turn the towns into fortresses against the Muslims. The Muslims learned to reduce the towns one by one.

Another reason for the failure of the strategy was the practice in Syria and Mesopotamia of negotiating peace terms, including monetary payment, with an invader instead of resisting violently until the end. Local elites had been so accustomed to dealing with the Persians in the sixth and early seventh centuries. That is probably another reason why Heraclius needed to appoint military commanders of unquestioning obedience to rule walled towns, so that they would not be surrendered to the Muslims. Yet the policy ultimately did not work. The towns managed to negotiate satisfactory terms with the Muslims, in most cases.

It is quite wrong to assume that there was no strategy on either side, that these events are not militarily comprehensible. But the existence of a strategy did not assure military victory. What was assumed to be a sensible strategy militarily, and one that was best for the majority of the civilian population, and one that rested on the strengths of the Byzantine army, became a trap that immobilized Byzantine troops, paralyzed communications, and trade, and cost the empire much tax revenue. It also foundered partly on rivalries between military, civilian, and ecclesiastical bureaucracies, who had somewhat different interests and could not compose these well even under the pressure of a threat of the total destruction of the existing system.

Fiscal constraints affected Byzantine recruitment of soldiers. The Late Roman system of military provisioning in terms of the *annona militaris* probably still existed. Yet the need to provide for supplies for so many soldiers limited the mobility of the Byzantine armies that were sent against the Muslims. There unquestionably were fiscal restraints on strategy as well as military operations of the Byzantines. The *annona militaris* with its need for central distribution of grain, probably encouraged dependence on large cities as military bases, because these served as depots for collection and distribution of *annonae*. That system limited Byzantine mobility and in particular made it difficult to pursue the Muslims into their own territory, if that were ever contemplated.

It is possible to write an entire volume of conclusions concerning Byzantine strategy, tactics, and operational decisions and actions, as well

as another on those of the Muslims. But that would be for another occasion. A few observations will suffice at this time.

Clamors from towns for immediate reinforcement and relief were a factor that seriously upset Heraclius' strategy, according to some Muslim sources, including Azdi. Their pressures probably forced Heraclius to do something, even if it was premature, to retain credibility and to encourage towns to try to hold out against the Muslims. Intensification of these clamors made it more difficult to make rational, calculating decisions about strategy and military operations. There was too much pressure of urgency from towns to be able to ignore them. Delegations from leading towns were demanding immediate action, yet relief for them could divert valuable troops from the essential problem of defeating the Muslims' striking forces. Yet Heraclius' strategy with its emphasis on walled towns made it difficult to ignore the pleas of the inhabitants of these endangered towns, which were militarily and fiscally important, indeed vital, to the Byzantines.

Khalid ibn al-Walid's expedition to Syria from Iraq in 634 ruined the Byzantine position's equilibrium; it was not merely his timely arrival, but it was his coming from an entirely unexpected direction that turned the flank of Byzantine defenses and contributed to the wrecking of a defensive strategy that otherwise had some plausibility.

Heraclius continued to hope that Byzantine commanders and towns would hold out for a long time against the Muslims, not only for the sake of the independence of those towns and their remaining allegiance to Byzantium, but because they tied down Muslim troops and commanders, and diverted attention away from the north, where Heraclius and his subordinates were creating new defensive lines. This was another way to stall for time. His appeal was not as pathetic and hopeless and puzzling as it first appears to have been.

No extant Byzantine military manual or history contains evidence that any systematic Byzantine analysis was made of the strategic and tactical conclusions, or "lessons" from the disastrous Byzantine experiences in fighting the Muslims in the 630s. Later Byzantine military authors, such as Emperor Leo VI (886-912) and other tenth-century authors include sections on how to fight the Arabs, but they do not cite specific cases from the 630s to document their points. Except for a treatise written under the alleged encouragement of Emperor Nicephorus Phocas (963-969), none of these really give much space specifically to fighting the Arabs. Whether other treatises once existed is unclear. Those campaigns may have been too painful to analyze, even though that was not a positive way to handle such experiences. They left no evident effect in extant Byzantine military writings, even though, as I have analyzed elsewhere, the Byzantine military

defeats at the hands of the Muslims did have a major effect on the Byzantine moods in the seventh century and left some imprint in other seventh-century Byzantine literature.

This is a reading of the extant evidence, in the light of Late Roman and Byzantine conditions and sources, especially military ones. Many problems and questions remain obscure, but it is important to attempt a critical analysis of as many of them as possible.