


# Byzantine diplomacy: The elixir of longevity

Diplomacy and technology: A historical journey

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# Map of our journey



| February                               | March  | April             | May                             | June                     |
|--|--|-------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Prehistory:<br>Origins of<br>diplomacy | Ancient<br>civilisations:<br>Sumer,<br>Assyria, Egypt,<br>Persia | Ancient<br>Greece | Rome and<br>Byzantine<br>Empire | Renaissance<br>diplomacy |

# When?

Roman  
Republic

509 - 27 BC

Roman  
Empire

27 BC - 476 AD

Byzantine  
Empire

330 - 1453 AD



# Where?



**Byzantine Empire, 565**

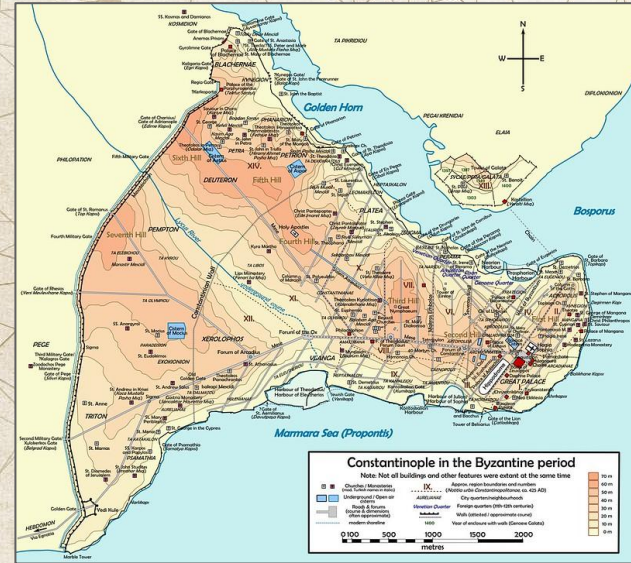
Map of the Eastern Roman empire under Justinian the Great, 555 AD





# Where?

## Istanbul was Constantinople...and Constantinople was Byzantium...





# From Rome to Byzantium

- Romans adopted and developed the Ancient Greek diplomatic tradition
- Embassies (*legatio*) of 10 - 12 ambassadors (*legati*), chosen for their skill at oratory.
- The Roman Law became the basis for treaties
- The foreign policy was conducted by Senate during the period of Republic, and by the Emperor during the Empire





# Byzantine diplomacy: Highlights

- Byzantine Empire lasted for 1123 years (330-1453 AD)
- It survived through adaptation
- Backbone: an organised administration
- Diplomacy was a necessity - with enemies on all of its borders, it had to avoid wars at all costs





# Byzantine diplomacy: Inherited practices

## From Hellenistic East (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia)

- Dynastic marriage
- Elaborate protocol
- Trade diplomacy - merchant ambassadors

## From Greece

- Use of soft power through rhetoric

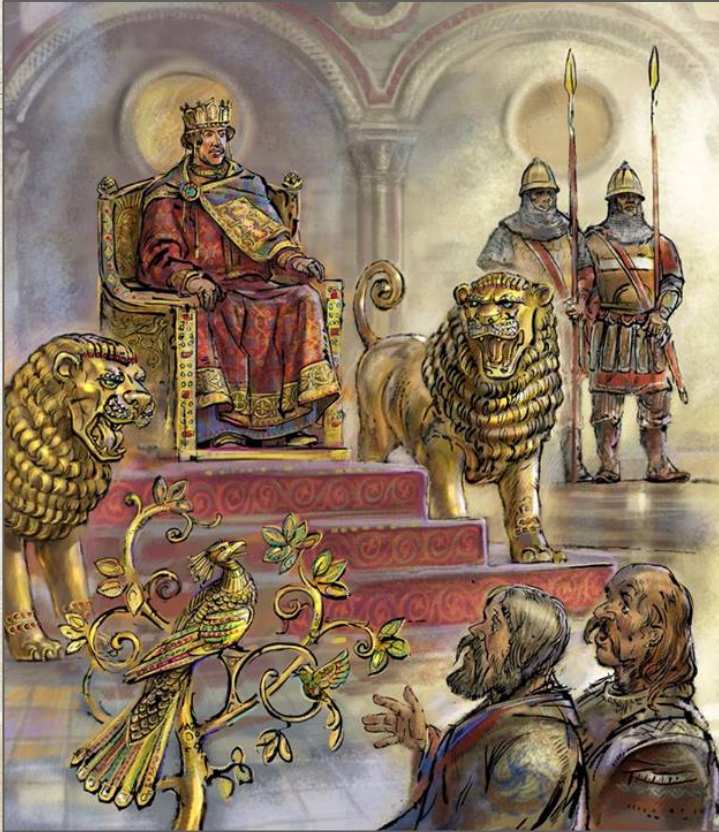
## From Rome

- Divide and rule principle
- Civil engineering





# Byzantine diplomacy: Innovations



- Proto Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
- **The Office of the Barbarian Affairs**
- Soft power and public diplomacy
- Introduction of regular diplomatic reporting



# Byzantine diplomacy: Innovations

- Proto intelligence service
- Early multistakeholder diplomacy
- Early international law
- Mastering the time-management





# Roman/Byzantine technology and inventions

## Communication

- Beacon (semaphore) system
- Postal system - *Cursus publicus*

## Architecture

- Cross-in-square
- Pendentive dome
- Pointed arch bridge

## Daily life

- *Corpus Iuris Civilis*
- Hospitals
- Ship mills

## Warfare

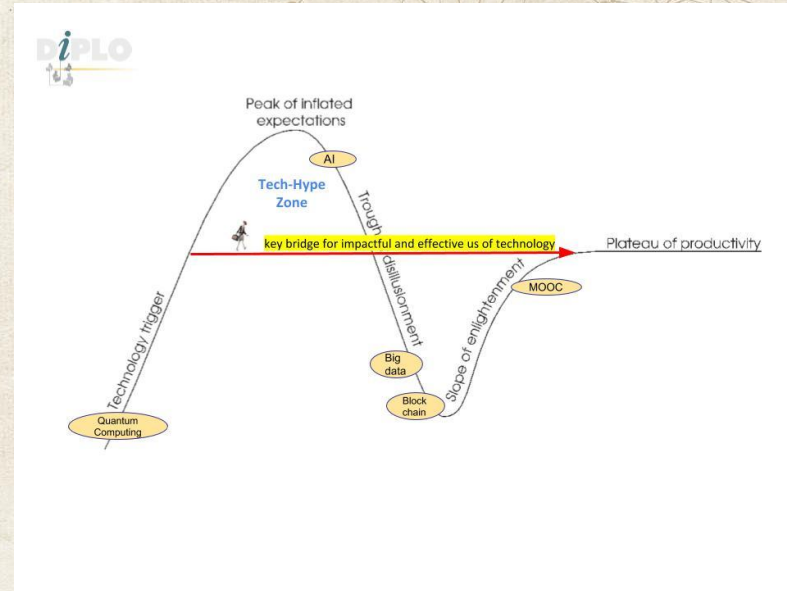
- Greek fire
- Hand-trebuchet
- Counterweight-trebuchet



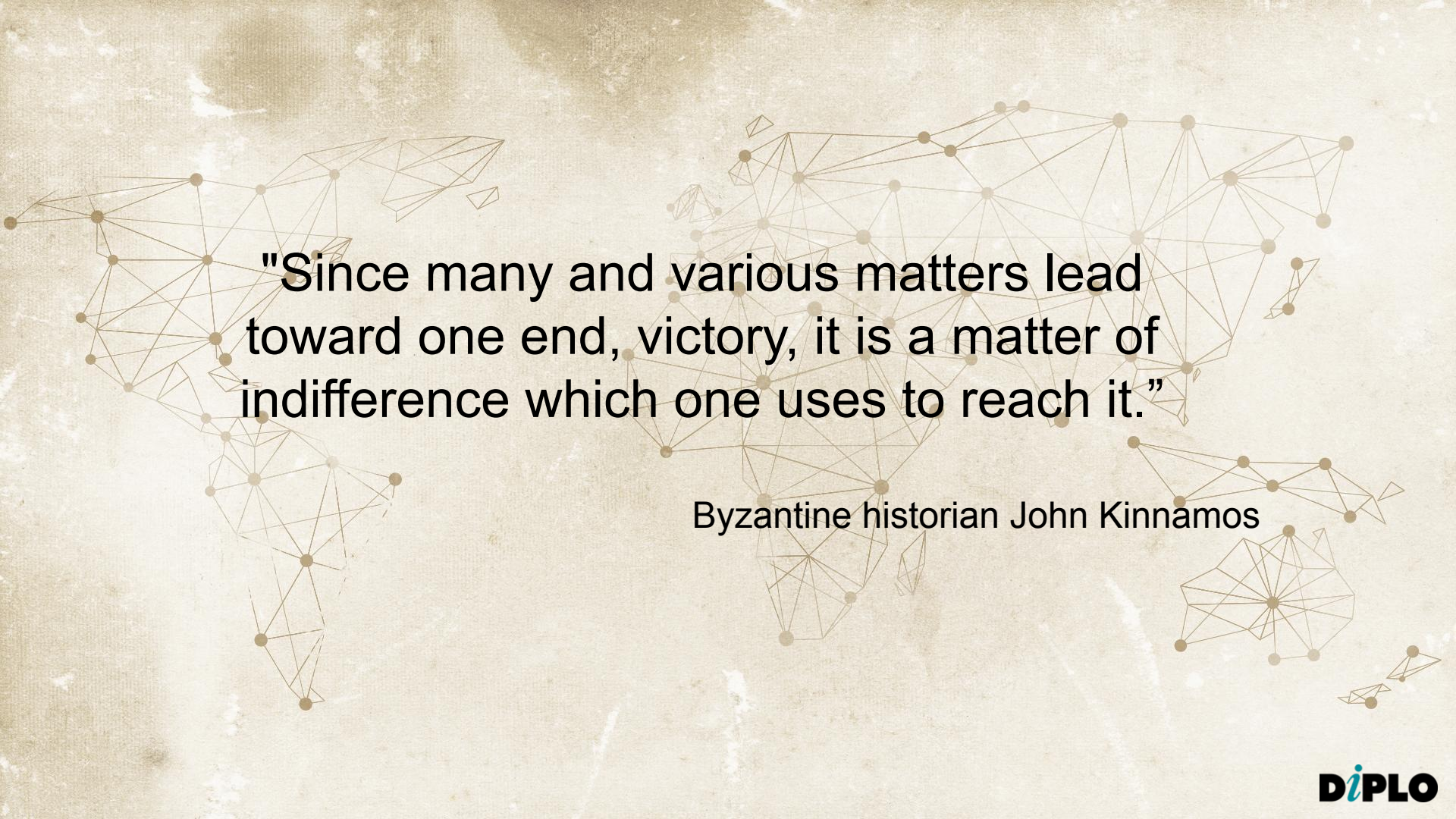


# Lessons for modern diplomacy

- Time management - consistent efforts over long period of time
- Centrality of information - avoiding information asymmetry
- Innovate gradually - avoid hype
- While innovate, keep the 'basics' in mind (the purpose of diplomatic work)







"Since many and various matters lead toward one end, victory, it is a matter of indifference which one uses to reach it."

Byzantine historian John Kinnamos



# Meanwhile in...Asia

## The Mongol Empire

- Genghis Khan (1206-1227) united the nomadic tribes of the North Asia, and conquered the vast territory from Korea to the Caspian Sea
- His successor, Chinggisid reached Poland and Asia Minor, conquering the whole of China
- The new empire practiced religious tolerance, merit over birth privileges and equality before law
- The rules of this vast empire were fairly simple: surrender, be loyal and enjoy privileges or perish.





# Cheers!

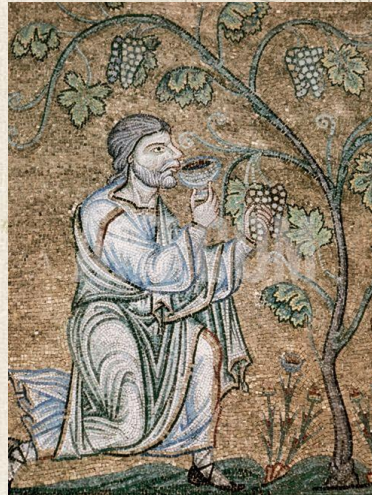
*“Byzantium conquers all with its wine”*

An old proverb

Monasteries were home to the most iconic drunks of the Byzantine period, namely monks.

A city the size of Antioch (~150,000) needed to bring about 15 million liters of wine into its walls each year.

The average Byzantine adult male drank about a liter per day!



Byzantines loved wine so much that they actually lived in the taverns and let out their homes to merchants and foreigners passing through the city.

People who couldn't afford wine drank '**posca**', a drink made by mixing vinegar, water, and (perhaps) herbs.