

An illustration of a medieval battle scene. In the foreground, a knight in full plate armor, including a helmet with a visor and chainmail aventail, is shown from the chest up, holding a sword. In the background, another knight on horseback is visible, and the sky is filled with many arrows flying through the air. The overall color palette is warm, with yellows, oranges, and browns.

ROAD TO MANZIKERT

BYZANTINE AND ISLAMIC WARFARE
527-1071



BRIAN TODD CAREY • JOSHUA B. ALLFREE
JOHN CAIRNS

Road to Manzikert:
Byzantine and Islamic Warfare,
527–1071

Road to Manzikert: Byzantine and Islamic Warfare, 527–1071

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Preface and Acknowledgements

The battle of Manzikert is often referenced as a ‘turning point’ when studying the clash of civilizations between Islam and Christian Europe in most college freshmen-level western and world civilization textbooks, a battle where a Seljuk victory over the Byzantine army led to the rapid Islamization of Anatolia and marked the decline of the Byzantine Empire. The battle is also often portrayed as the ‘*casus belli*’ for the Levantine crusades that for ever altered the relationship between the Islamic Middle East and the West. In fact, the battle of Manzikert is frequently the only Byzantine military engagement identified by name from the sixth century wars of Justinian to the successful Catholic siege of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade in 1204. Much of this is due to a western European focus when discussing the middle ages. However, a closer look at this dynamic period of Byzantine civilization reveals numerous important military engagements (Pliska, Anchialus, Dorostolon, to name a few) that marked the ebb and flow of Byzantine military fortunes and the usually sophisticated nature of the Byzantine approach to warfare.

Many of these same criticisms can be levelled at how Islamic warfare is treated in college textbooks. Muhammad’s prowess as a general is implied but rarely discussed. Muslim Arab victories like Yarmuk River and al-Qadisiya the seventh century over Byzantine and Sassanian Persian forces respectively are rarely mention by name, although these battlefield successes are well known and widely celebrated in the Islamic world today as proof of a past golden age when Islamic civilization could match and defeat powerful regional powers. A resurgent modern Turkey has a similar relationship with the battle of Manzikert. This victory over Romanus IV Diogenes marks the beginning of the Turkification of the peninsula and is today celebrated as a perfect symbol for Turkish nationalism. This was evident forty years ago when the battle was treated as a national event on its nine-hundredth anniversary in 1971. Today, a statue of the victorious Seljuk commander, Alp Arslan, on a rearing warhorse, stands at the western entrance of the modern city of Malazgirt (medieval Manzikert), while each year, on the anniversary of the battle on 26 August, the engagement is re-enacted by Turkish Boy Scouts in costume in front of throngs of adoring Turkish citizens.

As the title of this book suggests, this study attempts to shine more light on the military histories of these two significant, but often neglected, regions and civilizations in the early medieval period – the Byzantine and Islamic east, intertwining military histories that culminated in the important battle of Manzikert. Once again I am joined

by my excellent illustrators, Joshua B. Allfree and John Cairns, who illustrated our previous books, *Warfare in the Ancient World*, *Warfare in the Medieval World*, and *Hannibal's Last Battle: Zama and the Fall of Carthage*. These outstanding tactical, strategic and regional maps give this book its uniqueness and allow readers to easily visualize the military movements and strategic context of the battles covered in this book. Once again, we could not have completed this effort without the collaboration and support of a few notable people. First and foremost we would like to thank Pen and Sword Books for their dedication to this project. This is our second time working with Phil Sidnell and he has once again proved to be a wise editor, while the copy-editing of Ting Baker polished the narrative into its present form. Without their assistance this book would simply not have been possible. Special thanks are also extended to my superiors at the American Public University System, History and Military History Director Dr Brian Blodgett, Dean Linda Moynihan, and Provost Karan Powell, whose generous financial support through a research grant assisted me greatly in securing the materials needed to research and write my last two books. Finally, we would like to thank our family and friends whose unswerving support and sacrifice over the process of creating these past four books in the last six years has been instrumental to our success.

Brian Todd Carey
Loveland, Colorado

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Key to Maps

MAP KEY			
	INFANTRY		SHIPS/BOATS
	HEAVY INFANTRY		SIEGE ENGINES
	CAVALRY		STONE FORTIFICATIONS/WALLS
	HEAVY CAVALRY		ARCHERS IN SKIRMISH LINE
	ARCHERS		SKIRMISHERS
	HORSE ARCHERS		PALM GROVE
	JAVELINS		BLOCKED WELL
	SLINGERS		BAGGAGE/WAGONS
	ELEPHANTS		COMMANDER'S POSITION
	ADVANCES		TREES
	RETREATS		SWAMP/MARSH
	SKIRMISHING/ARCHERY FIRE		TERRAIN CONTOURS
	CAMPS		ROADS
	DITCHES		STREAMS/RIVERS, FORDS
	PALISADES		CLIFFS
	HEDGES		

Chronology of Byzantine and Islamic History from Justinian to the First Crusade

Byzantine Warfare from Justinian to Herakleios

527

Justinian becomes Byzantine emperor (r.527–565). Under his reign, the Eastern Roman Empire reaches its greatest territorial extent and expands into Italy and North Africa.

530

Justinian dispatches a Byzantine army under Belisarios that defeats the Sassanian Persians at the battle of Dara in Upper Mesopotamia.

532

Byzantines and Sassanians sign the Perpetual Peace to stabilize frontier zone. The treaty lasts less than a decade, and Byzantium and Persia continue to play strategic tug-of-war in the region until the early 630s when both empires face expansion of Islam out of the Arabian Peninsula.

533

Belisarios and his Byzantine army defeat the Vandals in North Africa at the battle of Tricameron, ending the Germanic kingdom and bringing this region into the empire.

535–554

A Byzantine army under Belisarios conquers the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy in the Gothic War between 535 and 540. Goths and Germanic allies counterattack, forcing Justinian to send Narses to put down the resurgent Goths and Franks.

552

Narses defeats Ostrogothic king Totila at battle of Taginae. After the battle, Narses pursued the remaining Goths to Naples, killing their new king and continuing his campaign of extermination. A truce at Mons Lactarius in 553 allowed surviving Goths to leave Italy and settle north of the Po River.

554

Narses defeats a Frankish–Alemannic army at Casilinum near Naples in southern Italy. Eastern Roman rule would only last another fourteen years before the final wave of Germanic invaders, the Lombards, occupied the northern two-thirds of the peninsula, ending for ever Justinian’s dream of imperial rule over Italy.

624–628

Byzantine Emperor Herakleios (r.610–641) personally leads three military expeditions against the Sassanians to recover territories lost in Anatolia, Mesopotamia and the Levant, re-establishing Byzantine rule after twenty-year absence.

Islamic Warfare from Muhammad to the Rashidun Caliphate

624

Muhammad (c.570–632) and his small Muslim army ambush and defeat the Meccans at the battle of Badr in Islam’s first military victory.

625

Meccans counterattack and defeat the Muslim army outside of Medina at the battle of Uhud. Meccans do not follow up on their victory, allowing Muhammad to rebuild his forces.

627

A large Meccan army returns to the region around Medina, but is unsuccessful in defeating Muhammad who has prepared the battlefield to his advantage. The Muslims win the battle of the Ditch, opening the way for the conquest of Mecca.

632–661

After the death of Muhammad in 632, his successors Abu Bakr (r.632–634), Umar (r.634–644), Uthman (r.644–656), and Ali (r.656–661) begin the Rashidun Caliphate. Under the Rashidun caliphs, Islamic armies expanded into North Africa, the Levant and Persia at the expense of the Byzantine and Sassanian Persian Empires in the period between 632 and 661.

632–633

Muhammad’s successor, Abu Bakr, initiates the short *Riddah* War to bring all of the Arabian Peninsula, both pagan and backsliders, into the Islamic faith. After consolidating his Muslim powerbase, Abu Bakr expands campaigning outside of the Arabian Peninsula.

636

Muslims defeat Byzantines at the battle of Yarmuk River and go on to conquer most of Syrian and Lebanon, greatly reducing Byzantine power in the Levant.

Muslim army defeats Sassanian Persians at battle of al-Qadisiya, press deeper into Mesopotamia and take Persian capital at Ctesiphon. Muslim campaigning continues

into Persia and Sassanian Empire falls in 644. Caliph Umar declares Oxus River north-eastern border of caliphate.

Byzantine Warfare in an Age of Crisis and Recovery

674–677

First Arab siege of Constantinople unsuccessful after Byzantines employ Greek Fire and destroy Muslim flotilla.

711

The Arab commander Tariq ibn Ziyad invades southern Spain with a Berber Muslim army. By 714 most of the Iberian Peninsula is under Muslim control. Within a year the Muslims begin raiding north of the Pyrenees, threatening Carolingian France.

717–718

Second Arab siege of Constantinople unsuccessful due to Byzantines using Greek Fire against Muslim navy and a Bulgar relief army attacking the Muslim siege lines.

811

Bulgar ruler Krum Khan (r.803–814) defeats Byzantine expeditionary force at the battle of Pliska, killing the Byzantine emperor Nikephoros I (r.802–811). After the battle, Bulgar raiding increased into Byzantine territory, with Constantinople sieged in 813. The new Byzantine emperor, Leo V (r.813–820), stabilized the Bulgarian frontier after Krum's death.

917

Bulgarian king Symeon (r.893–927) renews hostilities with Byzantium. Byzantine expedition deep into Bulgarian territory fails and Bulgarian victory at battle of Anchialus in 917 opens land up between Bulgaria and Constantinople to Bulgarian depredation. Frontier stabilized after Symeon's death in 927.

971

Emperor John I Tzimiskes (r.969–976) personally leads Byzantine army in victory over the Rus at Dorostolon, garrisoning the city and expanding imperial holdings in the Balkans. John next turns his attention to expanding Byzantine power in the Levant, but dies unexpectedly in 976.

987–988

The conversion of Kievan Grand Prince Vladimir I (r.980–1015) to Greek Orthodoxy establishes religious union with Constantinople. To strengthen political ties and secure a much needed ally Basil II offers his sister's hand to Vladimir in exchange for a force of 6,000 Varangian soldiers to assist the Greek emperor with the Anatolian rebellion and shore up his failing Bulgar frontier. Varangian Guard formed in 988.

1014

After years of annual campaigns into Bulgaria, Basil II defeats Czar Samuel (r.997–1014) at Kleidion, blinding 99 per cent of the 15,000 Bulgarian prisoners. Byzantine victory at Kleidion effectively ends large-scale organized resistance by Bulgarians. Northern frontier of Byzantine Empire once again set on Danube River.

Islamic Warfare from the Umayyads to the Coming of the Seljuk Turks

661–750

First major civil war within Islam ends with Sunni-Shia split and the rise of new Umayyad Caliphate (661–750) centred in Damascus. Wars of expansion continue into South Asia and Europe via North Africa.

664

Muslim generals begin raiding the Hindu-controlled Punjab region. Between 711 and 712 a large Arab expedition led by the brilliant young Arab general Muhammad bin Qasim, the son of a local Arab governor, brings the Sindh under Umayyad control, marking the beginning of the Muslim conquest of the Indian subcontinent

732

The Arab emir of Spain, Abdul Rahman al-Ghafiqi, crosses the Pyrenees and invades Aquitaine, then moves north and invests Orleans. Frankish major of the palace, Charles Martel (c.688–741), intercepts and defeats the Muslim raiding expedition at Tours.

750–1258

Muslim civil war ends Umayyad Caliphate with Abbasid victory at Zab River. New Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258) centred in Baghdad. Political fragmentation in Islamic world begins.

751

Provincial Islamic army defeats the Tang Chinese at battle of Talas River, stopping Chinese advances in Central Asia and opening the region to Islamization.

762

A new Muslim capital was established in Baghdad on the Tigris River, a move that continued the shift in Islam's political interests eastward while relieving some of the military pressure on Byzantium and Catholic Western Europe.

909–1171

Shia Fatimid Caliphate (909–1171) founded, centred first in Tunisia and then in Egypt. Cairo founded in 969. Fatimids control a vast empire stretching across the North Africa to the Atlantic Ocean, south into the Sudan and western Arabia, and north-east to the edge of Byzantine Syria and Abbasid domains in Mesopotamia.

945

Persian Buyids (932–1055) occupy Mesopotamia and push their way into Abbasid politics and confine the caliph to the palace. Fatimids support the Buyids in Baghdad, weakening the Abbasid Caliphate.

Eleventh Century Byzantine and Seljuk Campaigns in Anatolia and the Battle of Manzikert

1029–1063

Seljuk raiding begins in Armenia and eastern Anatolia in 1029, but intensifies after the Seljuk victory over the Ghaznavids at Dandanqan in 1040.

1048

Turkoman raiders destroy important regional trading centre of Arzen in south-eastern Anatolia, massacring and enslaving the Christian population.

1055

Seljuk sultan Toghril Beg (r.1055–1063) enters Baghdad in 1055 as champion of the Abbasid caliph, displacing the Buyids and assuming control of the Abbasid court. Toghril becomes first ruler of Great Seljuk Empire of Iran and de facto ruler of Islamic Persia and Mesopotamia. His new domain brushed up against the eastern frontiers of Byzantine-controlled Armenia and eastern Anatolia, retaken from the Arabs in the mid-tenth century.

1064

New sultan of the Great Seljuks of Iran, Alp Arslan (r.1063–1072), successfully sieges and takes ancient Armenian fortress city of Ani ('City of a Thousand-and-One Churches'), but does not allow his Turkoman allies to destroy the city.

1064–1068

Alp Arslan subdues kingdom of Georgia after four years of annual campaigns, taking the king's daughter as a wife to cement the alliance. Sultan continues to campaign in Upper Mesopotamia against Arab emirs to shore up frontier.

1067–1068

Prolonged and deep Turkoman raiding into Anatolia continues. Renegade Seljuk nobleman named Afsinios sacks Byzantine city of Caesarea and then wheels south to raid Cilicia and the region around Antioch in north-western Syria

1068–1070

Romanus IV Diogenes (r.1068–1071) becomes Byzantine co-emperor in 1068 and immediately campaigns in Syria to prop up and hopefully expand his possessions in the Levant. The emperor is forced to abandon 1069 campaign to Lake Van region when Greek rearguard is defeated by Seljuks. Romanus stays in Constantinople in 1070 to quell court intrigue and improve conditions of his army. The 1070 Byzantine

expedition sent to Lake Van region is annihilated near Sebastae in Anatolia. Turkoman raiding intensifies and Greek city of Chonae is destroyed.

1071

In March Romanus departs Constantinople at head of Manzikert expedition, arriving in Lake Van region in August. He divides army, sending over half to invest Chliat as he covers Manzikert. Alp Arslan abandons long-planned Fatimid campaign and surprises Romanus outside Manzikert. Byzantines lose battle because of desertion, defection and betrayal among the Byzantine troops and Romanus is captured and later released.

In April the city of Bari fell to the Norman adventurer Robert Guiscard. Bari had been the wealthiest and best defended city in Byzantine-held Apulia before succumbing to the Norman land and sea blockade, ending more than five centuries of Byzantine rule in Italy.

The Seljuk Invasion of Anatolia and the Origins of the Levantine Crusades

1071–1081

After the Byzantine loss at Manzikert, Turkoman raiding increases into Anatolia. Seljuk emirs settle in parts of the peninsula and assist Byzantine emperors and pretenders to the throne in this period of civil war, becoming power brokers in Byzantine affairs.

1072

Deposed after the loss at Manzikert, Romanus gathers a loyal army but is captured and blinded by his political rivals. He later dies in captivity. Alp Arslan is killed campaigning in his eastern provinces by a treasonous emir.

Malikshah (r.1072–1092) succeeds his father, Alp Arslan, as sultan of Great Seljuk Empire of Iran.

1077

In 1077, two Byzantine generals rebelled nearly simultaneously against the reign of Michael VII Doukas. Nikephoros III Botaneiates (r.1078–1081) wins power struggle with assistance of Seljuk troops. Nikephoros III marks the end of Byzantine Anatolia as the primary source of military manpower and horses.

Seljuk ruler Suleyman begins carving his own Seljuk Sultanate of Rum (1077–1243), named in honour of its location on hallowed Roman territory.

1081

The reign of Alexios I Komnenos (r.1081–1118) begins period of Byzantine military, economic and territorial recovery known as the 'Komnenian Restoration'.

1095

Alexios begins reconciliatory measures towards the papacy in order to secure western support for his wars against the Seljuk Turks, culminating in ambassadors appearing before Pope Urban II at the Council of Piacenza in northern Italy in early March.

1095

Urban II travels north to central France where he chairs Council of Clermont and calls into existence the First Crusade on 27 November 1095.

1096–1097

Enormous hosts of Roman Catholic soldiers and pilgrims begin gathering outside the walls of Constantinople between October 1096 and April 1097.

1097

With assistance from Alexios, the Catholic crusaders successfully cross Anatolia and defeat a Seljuk army led by Kilij Arslan (r.1092–1107) at the battle of Dorylaeum in the summer of 1097, clearing the way for further crusader conquests.

1097–1098

The Seljuk-held Antioch falls after a seven-and-a-half-month siege, followed by the Armenian Christian city of Edessa in early 1098.

1099

The Latin armies continue south to Jerusalem, capturing the Holy City after a five-week siege and infamously bloody storm in the summer of 1099. By the early twelfth century, the crusaders have carved out feudal possessions in the Levant consisting of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the County of Tripoli in Lebanon, the Principality of Antioch, and the County of Edessa in Armenia. First Crusade ends.

Introduction: Byzantium, Islam and Catholic Europe – The Battle of Manzikert as Historical Nexus

The Battle of Manzikert in Modern History

The battle of Manzikert has long been considered a turning point in the history of the Byzantine civilization. In late August 1071 the Eastern Roman emperor Romanus IV Diogenes (r.1068–1071) formed his multi-national army outside of the walls of the fortress city of Manzikert near Lake Van on the empire's Armenian frontier. His adversary was the second sultan of the Great Seljuk Empire of Iran, Alp Arslan (r.1063–1072), ruler of the most powerful Muslim state in the Near East and champion of the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad. The battle that unfolded over the course of a few days would witness desertion, defection and betrayal among the Byzantine troops and the ultimate defeat and capture of Romanus. This event sent shockwaves across the Christian and Islamic worlds and opened the floodgates of Turkish invasion and migration into Anatolia, strategically the most important region to the Byzantine Empire. A decade of civil war and Seljuk depredations further weakened the Eastern Roman Empire, forcing Alexios I Komnenos (r.1081–1118) to ask for military assistance from Catholic Western Europe, and the First Crusade was born.

For more than two centuries historians have remarked on the magnitude of the Byzantine defeat at Manzikert and subsequent loss of Anatolia. The Enlightenment English historian Edward Gibbon wrote in his seminal work, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1789), that '[t]he Byzantine writers deplore the loss of an inestimable pearl: they forgot to mention that, in this fatal day, the Asiatic provinces of Rome were irretrievably sacrificed.'¹ Another Englishman, the military historian Charles Oman, echoed Gibbon when he wrote in 1898 that 'the empire had suffered other defeats as bloody as Manzikert, but none had such disastrous results.'² In volume three of his *History of the Art of War: Medieval Warfare* (1923), the German military historian Hans Delbrück challenged both Oman's assertion of the enormous size of the Byzantine and Seljuk armies and how the battle unfolded, but agreed with Oman that 'Alp Arslan destroyed most of the Byzantine army.'³ A half century later, the esteemed crusade historian Steven Runciman reemphasized the importance of the engagement in volume one of his *History of the Crusades* (1951) when he boldly stated that '[the] battle of

Manzikert was the most decisive disaster in Byzantine history.⁷⁴ About this same time, the eminent German historian of Byzantium, George Ostrogorsky, commented that ‘the numerically superior, but heterogeneous and undisciplined, Byzantine army was annihilated by the forces of Alp Arslan.’⁷⁵ In the decades that followed, other historians have added their voice to this chorus. More recently, John Norwich remarked in his *Byzantium: The Apogee* (2006) that ‘the battle of Manzikert was the greatest disaster suffered by the Empire of Byzantium in the seven and a half centuries of its existence.’⁷⁶ All of these historians emphasized Manzikert as a decisive defeat and a pivotal engagement, after which Byzantine Anatolia was violently transformed into Muslim Asia Minor.

However, other historians have questioned the decisive nature and strategic significance of the battle of Manzikert and the fantastical troop strengths of the belligerents, prompting historians as early as Delbruck to comment that ‘a study and review of the battle based on the sources would be desirable.’⁷⁷ This challenge was actually taken up in the early twentieth century when the French historian J. Laurent began to piece together the late eleventh century Manzikert campaign using Christian and Islamic sources. Detailed studies of Byzantine and Turkish Anatolia followed later in the late 1960s when the French historian Claude Cahen and American historian Speros Vryonis reconstructed the Islamization of Anatolia using Muslim and Byzantine primary sources and a growing body of archaeological evidence. Vryonis and the French scholar Jean-Claude Cheynet would write articles challenging old perceptions of Manzikert as a crippling military defeat and their findings would be reflected in the writings of many prominent contemporary and future historians writing on this subject, including Jonathan Riley-Smith, Warren Treadgold, and John Haldon, to name a few.⁸

The Battle of Manzikert Revisited

This work endeavours to follow the revisionist vein of scholarship concerning the battle of Manzikert and its place in military history. Although not the devastating loss described by contemporaries of the battle and repeated by some historians over the last two hundred years, Manzikert does represent a significant historical nexus with a cast of players from many of the major civilizations shaping the medieval world in 1071. Accompanying Romanus and his native Greek troops on his campaign were Byzantium’s traditional allies, the Armenians and Georgians, whose homelands the expedition was approaching in eastern Anatolia. Because of court intrigue in Constantinople and the poor combat capabilities of native imperial forces, Romanus supplemented his army using mercenaries from Catholic Europe, most notably the Normans, and warriors from the Eurasian steppes, including the Bulgars, Uze, and Pechenegs, once and future adversaries of the Byzantine Empire. Protecting the emperor were members of the Varangian Guard, Swedo-Slavic warriors from the Ukraine who had served the Eastern Roman emperor since the reign of Basil II (r.976–1025) and died in large numbers trying to protect him when the Byzantine army began to disintegrate that fateful August evening.

Romanus’ adversary at Manzikert, sultan Alp Arslan, was served by the greatest light cavalry corps of the age, the fleet and ferocious Seljuk steppe warriors, many of whom were the barely Islamized and often uncontrollable Turkoman raiders. These mounted

warriors had plagued Anatolia for decades before the battle of Manzikert and were instrumental in the invasion of the peninsula in the wake of the Byzantine defeat. As ruler of a new sultanate that stretched from Armenia to the Oxus River and south to the Persian Gulf, Alp Arslan commanded a multi-national army capable of sophisticated military action that married the best of steppe tactics with the martial traditions of Umayyad and Abbasid warfare. The result was an Islamic army capable of campaigning on horseback over vast distances and different topographies, converging on the enemy from numerous directions, striking, and then disappearing in Central Asian fashion, or fighting set-piece battles and reducing powerful fortress cities in a manner consistent with the more infantry-focused militaries of the age.

Romanus understood how to meet and beat the mounted Seljuk army that arrayed before his combined-arms army outside the walls of Manzikert, as he was a proven general well-versed in the numerous Byzantine tactical manuals produced by past emperors and generals. But Romanus, for reasons both in and out of his control, did not heed those lessons and his poor generalship was instrumental in his army's defeat. Romanus ignored hundreds of years of Byzantine military doctrine developed fighting previous steppe societies like the Huns, Khazars, Bulgars, Magyars, and Pechenegs. But Romanus' defeat was not entirely due to bad military decisions. His expedition was sabotaged even before battle was met by the desertion of over half his army and the defection of valuable steppe allies. The betrayal of his reserves, under the command of a political rival, sealed his fate. Still, the loss was not a great tactical disaster, as only about 10 per cent of the total Manzikert expedition was lost, hardly the annihilation depicted in the primary sources and repeated by many modern historians. The Byzantine army was not destroyed, but Romanus' capture, blinding and death precipitated a decade of Byzantine civil war where Seljuk emirs and troops played instrumental roles in raising new Byzantine emperors to the purple. In the decade between the Byzantine loss at Manzikert in 1071 and the accession of Alexios I Komnenos in 1081, Byzantium's strategic position was severely degraded on all frontiers and much of Anatolia was lost to the Seljuk Turks. However, the strategic situation in Asia Minor was far from static. Beginning with Alexios, Byzantine armies retook important regions of the peninsula and Catholic crusader successes in the Levant changed the balance of power, albeit temporarily, between Islam and Christendom in this region. These modest successes so long after Manzikert reduce, but do not eliminate, the strategic importance of this battle in history.

Manzikert was an influential engagement, one referred to again and again by Byzantine historians as 'that dreadful day.'⁹ A large Byzantine expeditionary force was defeated and perhaps just as importantly, the emperor of the Eastern Romans, ruler of the most powerful Christian civilization over the last five hundred years, was captured by a Muslim prince. The psychological importance of this event to the Islamic world is difficult to overestimate. Romanus' campaign in 1071 also changed the trajectory of Islamic history. Alp Arslan's long-awaited campaign against the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt was first detoured to intercept the Byzantine army at Manzikert, and then derailed when the sultan was killed by a treacherous emir in his eastern provinces a year later. Romanus' loss at Manzikert should be seen more as a political disaster than a military defeat, one that weakened Byzantium's standing among its political and military rivals and invited challenges to Byzantine power on the edges of empire and