

- At the time of Justinian, the empire was Hellenistic. No Turks yet lived in Asia Minor and no Arabs lived in Egypt. The most dangerous enemies of the Byzantines were the Persians, who sacked Antioch in 540. Justinian's costly military campaigns to recover the West allowed the Persians to make encroachments in the East.

**Presentation
Summarizing Ideas
(Average/Group)**

Have students develop in their notebooks a chart listing the political, military, and economic strengths of the Byzantine Empire. The following should be listed under *Political*: autocratic, highly centralized government; bureaucracy of trained officials; skillful diplomats. Under *Military*: good defenses; good intelligence system; good navy. Under *Economic*: wealth based on agriculture, manufacturing, and trade; Constantinople at crossroads of trade between Europe and Asia; government regulated manufacturing and trade to produce large tax revenues.

After the students complete this chart, encourage them to discuss how these strengths might be important in making a nation strong today.



Learning from Maps The Germanic invaders established kingdoms as far south as northern Africa. What group controlled northern Italy? **Ostrogoths**

Emperor Justinian, who ruled from 527 to 565, led this revival and accomplished so much that the 37 years of his reign marked one of the most splendid periods in Byzantine history. Justinian's uncanny instinct for judging the abilities of others allowed him to choose exceptional people to help him rule the empire. Two wise choices were his wife, Theodora, and the commander-in-chief of his army, Belisarius (bel • uh • SAR • ee • uhs).

Theodora. The Byzantine Empire had several famous empresses, but the most extraordinary was Justinian's wife, Theodora. Theodora spent her early childhood with the circus, where her father trained bears. A pretty, witty, and intelligent girl, Theodora became an actress in her early teens. Soon she met and fell in love with Justinian. Although Byzantine law forbade marriage between high imperial officials and actresses, Justinian ignored the law and married Theodora in 523.

With Theodora's encouragement, Justinian changed Byzantine law to improve the status of women. Justinian decreed that a husband could not beat his wife and that a woman could sue for divorce if her husband mistreated her. Justinian changed the law prohibiting women from owning

property. The new law allowed a woman to own property equal to the value of her dowry, the money or goods that she brought to her husband when the couple married. Furthermore, Justinian repealed an old law that forced a widow to surrender her children to a male relative. The new law allowed the widow to raise her own children.

Theodora's most dramatic contribution to her husband's success took place in 532. A group of senators, angry about high taxes, had organized a revolt known as the Nika Rebellion. As the leaders of the rebellion threatened to crown a new emperor, a cowering Justinian prepared to flee Constantinople. However, Theodora urged him to stay and fight. In a fierce battle, Justinian's troops hacked 30,000 rebels to death, ensuring that he would remain on the throne.

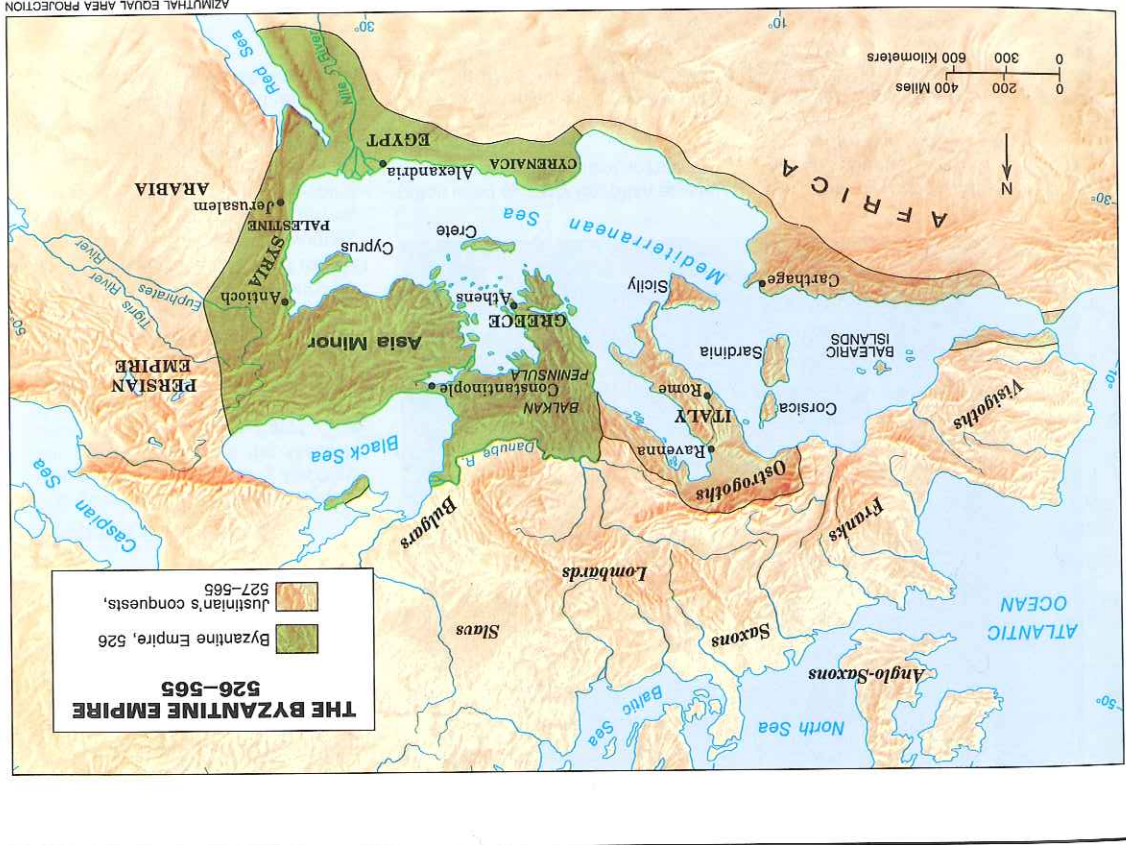
Belisarius. Justinian's appointment of Belisarius as commander-in-chief of the army proved as successful and unconventional as his choice of a wife. An officer of peasant stock who had little money, Belisarius had very little military experience. He was a friend of Theodora, however, and he had made a name for himself leading the troops that crushed the Nika Rebellion.

While the new Germanic kingdoms in the west quarreled among themselves, Justinian's armies, under the capable leadership of Belisarius, regained many territories in the Mediterranean region. As a result of these conquests, the Byzantine Empire reached its greatest territorial extent during Justinian's reign (see map, page 189).

The legacy of Justinian. After Justinian's death in 565, the empire suffered almost 50 years of civil wars, made worse by attacks from the outside. From the East came the Persians, whom Justinian's successors defeated in the late 500s. Meanwhile, an Asiatic group, the Avars, and a European people, the Slavs, invaded the Balkan Peninsula. The Lombards sacked Italy. By the early 600s, Germanic tribes had won back most of the territory that Justinian's armies had spent so much time conquering.

During the 600s the Byzantine Empire faced a new and highly energetic force—the armies of the Muslim Empire (see Chapter 9). The Muslims soon conquered Armenia, Syria, Palestine, and much of North Africa, including Egypt. After 650 the eastern empire consisted of little more than Asia Minor, the southern Balkan Peninsula, parts of Italy, and the nearby islands.

- Byzantine emperors began military reforms when barbarian cavalry proved superior in battle to the heavily armed legionaries. Byzantine power then stemmed from cavalry who wore steel caps and mail shirts, and carried swords, daggers, bows, and a lance. The emperors also hired mercenaries until the empire could no longer afford this luxury.



Learning from Maps Justinian, perhaps the greatest of the Byzantine emperors, reunited most of the lands around the Mediterranean coast. What parts of the former Western Roman Empire did he reconquer? Italy, southern Spain, North Africa

Strengths of the Empire

Several factors helped the Byzantine Empire survive for more than 1,000 years. It had political, military, and economic strength, and its people adapted skillfully to change.

Political strength.

A highly centralized and autocratic government headed by an all-powerful emperor ruled the Byzantine Empire. Well-paid, efficient, skillful, and usually loyal officials carried out imperial commands and policies. Even during times of weak emperors or civil war, these officials made sure the empire ran smoothly.

The Byzantines practiced especially shrewd diplomacy. Their excellent intelligence service kept the emperor well informed of important foreign developments. They often bribed foreign officials to obtain information. To cement alliances Byzantine emperors often arranged marriages between

Military strength.

Byzantine rulers developed effective frontier, infantry, cavalry, and engineering corps to defend the empire. The government rewarded them with land grants. The military provided its soldiers with medical services and developed instruction manuals and established schools to teach leaders the latest strategies. It also replaced the bow and lance with the sword and javelin and designed a more protective armor.

During the 500s the Byzantines built a strong navy. Ships had battering rams, but the sailors' secret weapon was a flammable liquid called "Greek fire," which they hurled to set enemy ships ablaze. So carefully did the Byzantines guard their secret