

Machiavelli, Islam and the East

Reorienting the Foundations of Modern Political Thought

Edited by Lucio Biasiori
and Giuseppe Marcocci



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Editors

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Reorienting the Foundations of Modern Political
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PREFACE

A one-day workshop entitled ‘Machiavelli, Islam and the East’ was held at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, on 6 May 2013, when a group of colleagues gathered to celebrate the fifth centenary of *The Prince* by discussing overlooked features of its author’s contribution to the foundation of modern political thought. The event was organized in the framework of the FIRB-Futuro in Ricerca 2008 research project ‘Beyond the Holy War’ (2010–2014), of which Giuseppe Marcocci was the Principal Investigator, funded by the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research.

We are grateful to the staff of the Scuola Normale Superiore for making the workshop possible. Its success was ensured by the active presence of a number of scholars who do not contribute to this volume, but presented or commented on papers, chaired sessions, or took part in the general discussion. They are: Silvia Berti, Giancarlo Casale, Valentina Lepri, Michele Olivari, Géraud Poumarède, Adriano Prosperi, Maria Elena Severini, Vasileios Syros, Alberto Tonini and Andrea Trentini. At the same time we also wish to express our gratitude to Muzaffar Alam, Nergiz Yılmaz Aydoğdu, Carlo Ginzburg, Kaya Şahin and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, who joined this book project at a later stage.

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better support than that Jade Moulds and Oliver Dyer, Assistant Editors for History, provided, or for greater patience on their part. They all made our editorial work a real pleasure.

The reference edition used in this volume for Machiavelli's writings in English translation is *The Chief Works and Others*, edited and translated by Allan H. Gilbert, 3 vols. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1989). Transliteration of Ottoman Turkish, Arabic and Persian follows the Library of Congress system, except Muzaffar Alam's and Sanjay Subrahmanyam's chapter, which uses the Steingass system. Special thanks to Elisabetta Benigni, Yasemin Köle and Kaya Şahin for their linguistic assistance.

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Introduction: Reorienting Machiavelli

Lucio Biasiori and Giuseppe Marcocci

One day, sometime in the second half of the sixteenth century, the Mughal emperor Akbar the Great (r. 1556–1605) was presented with a dilemma. The arrival of a tall, blond young man from Europe did not pass unnoticed in Fatehpur Sikri, the city in which the Mughal court was located at that time. Somehow, the stranger managed to gain access to Akbar, telling him an extraordinary tale. The emperor found himself in a quandary: should he believe the unexpected guest, or put him to death as an insolent trickster? It was not only the letter that the visitor bore, in which Queen Elizabeth I of England (r. 1558–1603) proposed an alliance with the Mughal emperor in order to put a stop to the spread of Spanish Jesuits in Asia, that unsettled Akbar; even more disturbing was the stranger's claim to be the emperor's very own relation. It was on that occasion that Akbar learnt that, in fact, his grandfather Bābur (1483–1530), the first Mughal emperor (r. 1526–1530), had a sister, whose trace had been lost, and then even her memory. This sister's name was

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Qara Kōz, but the European young man, who was actually a Florentine by the name of Niccolò Vespucci, knew her as Angelica. Qara Kōz/Angelica had been kidnapped by an Uzbek warlord and, after various vicissitudes in which she changed hands, brought to the court of the shah of Persia. From there she was sent to Istanbul, after which she had been accompanied to Florence by Antonino Argalia, a condottiero who had made his fortune in the service of the Ottoman Empire under the name of Pasha Avcalia the Turk. As a young man in his native city of Florence, Argalia had been close friends with Niccolò “il Machia”—Machiavelli, the future author of *The Prince*—and Ago (Agostino) Vespucci, a cousin of the celebrated Amerigo, from whom the New World discovered by Christopher Columbus was to take its name a few years later. This very Niccolò Vespucci, who in the second half of the sixteenth century entwined the threads of this account before a disoriented Akbar, was the son of Angelica and her last lover, Ago Vespucci. Thus, the double life of Qara Kōz directly linked the greatest Mughal emperor to Machiavelli’s Florence and, through Amerigo Vespucci, to the discovery of America.

This bizarre story does not originate from some archival source. It is actually the web of relations that provides the basis for the plot of Salman Rushdie’s novel *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008), a title that alludes to Qara Kōz, alias Angelica.¹ The work blends fictional and factual elements, in a continuous flow of names, pseudonyms, places, digressions and fragmentary tales.² A case in point is Niccolò “il Machia”, a character modelled on the historical figure of the famous Florentine secretary—including his daily tiffs with his wife Marietta. Niccolò is presented as a man who fully identifies with the political life of his city, which Rushdie reveals chiefly through his eyes. Here we have a sympathetically portrayed Machiavelli, the author aiming to redeem his image from the centuries-old stratification of stereotypes that have made his name a “synonym for deviousness, cynicism and realpolitik”.³

Rushdie’s is only one of a long series of representations of Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) that have moulded his myth. At the same time, the novel outlines a framework of increasing exchanges and connections on a Eurasian scale, with significant links to America, which has been neglected as a means of more adequately situating Machiavelli’s writings in the historical context of their production and reception. Clearly, Rushdie is interested in finding a literary device to establish a relation between two ideal settings for his postmodern novel: the Mughal court, which was famous for its religious tolerance at the time of Akbar, and

Renaissance Florence. The present volume, by contrast, while offering a reconstruction that considers the premises and circulation of Machiavelli's literary output in a geography of cross-cultural interactions not so different from Rushdie's, replaces fiction with philology and historical research.

Reorienting Machiavelli entails restoring the centrality of his encounter with Islam and the East, a term packed with implications. Here, we use the phrase to refer to the productive intersection of the physical and political reality of Asia with the vague knowledge of it shared by many, although not all, of the Europeans who wrote about it in the early modern period. In those centuries of broadening geographical perspective, Machiavelli's works emerged as a much more effective tool to compare events and processes on a world scale than has been previously recognised. Furthermore, comparison with other cultures and traditions increasingly helped those writings to escape the "black legend" surrounding them and, among other things, make their way in eighteenth century Europe. As this volume demonstrates, reflection on Machiavelli himself was transformed by the contact of his writings with Islam and the East. Taking into account these features of the Machiavellian legacy allows us to understand in a less linear and teleological way his crucial contribution to the foundations of modern political thought, which is typically reduced to a process entirely limited to the West.⁴ Moreover, careful scrutiny of evidence found in Machiavelli's work of interest in Islam and the East, as well as a recreation of significant fragments of their reception, demonstrate the extent to which *The Prince* and Machiavelli's other compositions can be read as pieces of a wider Eurasian mosaic. Between the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, this mosaic was already characterised by incessant political communication across linguistic, cultural and religious borders.

We seek to reclaim the complex and multiform nature of Machiavelli's works, with respect to their origins, targets and spread. Moreover, we wish to bring to light the multiplicity of possible readings that his pages have suggested over the centuries. To do so, we must move beyond the simplifications that even today reduce Machiavelli's thought to a flat anthology of maxims for governance, or, worse still, wrongly present him as a theorist of the supposed superiority of western values now threatened by an unavoidable "clash of civilizations" whose ugliest face is Daesh.⁵

Hence, this volume takes a different tack. The substance of Machiavelli's ideas cannot be encapsulated in phrases and slogans, and the rich reserve of references found on his pages has hardly been fully exploited. Moreover, if his writings quickly circulated round the globe, albeit through tortuous paths that, in the main, await reconstruction, this was partly due to his claims concerning Muslim powers. These are discussed here as manifestations of a shared political and cultural space with the Mediterranean at the centre, but also encompassing the main states and kingdoms in Europe. In other words, we aim to rethink Machiavelli within an open and global Renaissance, which was the outgrowth of interactions with a variety of cultures excluded from the traditional interpretation of it as a quintessentially European movement.⁶ We also hope to re-establish the connections between Machiavelli's reflections and the Islamic world, which predate by several centuries the translation of his compositions in north Africa, the Middle East and south Asia.⁷

Recent scholarship has signalled the continuity that existed between Renaissance Europe and the Islamic world.⁸ Yet this important revision has thus far failed to assign a place either to political thought or to Machiavelli, who lived in an epoch marked by the Ottoman advance in the Mediterranean and the emergence of two other Muslim empires—the Safavid Empire in Persia and the Mughal Empire in India.⁹ As Margaret Meserve has aptly observed, “thinking about Turks without thinking of and objecting to their religion was something that few humanists were willing or even able to attempt. Machiavelli was probably the first to do so in total seriousness”.¹⁰ Indeed, Machiavelli does this with every political configuration pertaining to the Muslim world.

Meserve rightly considers Chapter 4 of *The Prince*.¹¹ There we find a comparison between the Ottoman Empire and France, significantly inserted after mention of the eastern conquests of Alexander the Great, a key figure in the pantheon of shared political references in Eurasian culture. Machiavelli contrasts the “monarchy of the Turk”, “governed by one ruler” while “the others are his servants” and therefore more difficult to gain but easier to hold, with the French Kingdom, whose ruler “is placed amidst a long-established multitude of lords acknowledged by their own subjects and loved by them”, making it a principedom easy to gain but difficult to hold.¹² And if the alliance between these two powers in the following decades may also be seen as transferring to reality Machiavelli's pragmatic approach to the Ottoman Empire, without any

negative connotation as a religious enemy, it is no accident that original readings of references to the Islamic world found in *The Prince* and the *Discourses on Livy* emerged in sixteenth century French culture.¹³

More generally, despite an intermittently intense military confrontation between Christian Europe and the new Ottoman power, from the sixteenth century on the calls for crusading became more and more rhetorical, leading to a reshaping of relations in ways that usually went beyond religious war.¹⁴ This shift as regards the Islamic world is also demonstrated by Machiavelli's treatment of the Mamluk Sultanate, which was to collapse before the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517. In Chapter 19 of *The Prince*, concerning the manner in which its ruler was elected, the Mamluk regime is considered together with "the Christian papacy, which cannot be called either a hereditary principedom or a new one, because the descendants of the old prince are not his heirs and do not rule by inheritance".¹⁵

Religion is without question a major preoccupation in Machiavelli's political thought, both as an instrument of rulership (in *The Prince*) and for its contribution to civic cohesion and the impulse to perform valorous acts in war (especially in the *Discourses*). Yet rather than Christianity, Machiavelli had in mind the ancient religion of the Romans. Partly for this reason, it was the *Discourses*, thanks to the continuity it suggests between ancient Romans and modern Ottomans, that was a watershed in European thinking on the Islamic empires and, in particular, "the ruler of Turkey" who, as Machiavelli writes in a poem written around 1522, "sharpens his weapons (*auzza l'armi*)"—a reference to the threatening intentions of Sultan Süleymân (r. 1520–1566), who in the next few years laid siege to Vienna (1529), after inflicting severe defeats on the army of the Holy Roman Empire.¹⁶ More than in *The Prince*, which does however show admiration for the unity of the Ottoman army ("anyone who assails the Turk", one reads in Chapter 4, "must reckon on finding a united country and must depend more on his forces than on revolt by others"), it is in the *Discourses* that the description of the wars waged by the Ottomans, reinforced by detailed reference to recent episodes, thanks to the information that Machiavelli gathered from some "who come from his land", gains in depth.¹⁷ Specifically, the idea of continuity between the military valour of the Romans and the Ottomans was plainly advanced. This notion was especially shocking in the context of Renaissance competition among the major European powers for the legacy of the greatness of Rome. For instance, in Chapter 30 of Book

I it is said that “a prince (...) should go personally on his campaigns, as at first the Roman emperors did, as in our times the Turk does, and as prudent rulers always have done and now do”.¹⁸ Or, Chapter 19 of Book I praises the alternation of princes who love war or peace, embodied by the succession of the Ottoman sultans Mehmed II, Bāyezīd II and Selīm I, “the present ruler”, because it would confirm that “after an excellent prince a weak prince can maintain himself. (...) So those princes are weak who do not give constant attention to war”: it was the same model, Machiavelli argues immediately after, that had made the birth of the Roman power possible, since “the ability (*virtù*) of Romulus” was followed by “the arts of peace” of Numa Pompilius, and then by the “courage (*ferocità*)” of Tullus Hostilius.¹⁹

The association between the Romans and the Ottomans, particularly between their military successes, was picked up in the *Commentario de le cose de' turchi* by the Italian humanist Paolo Giovio, issued in 1532, the year after the *Discourses*, by the same publisher, Antonio Blado in Rome. Machiavelli’s dig about the religion of the Romans that, though false and contrary to Christianity, led their captains and soldiers to esteem “the honor of the world” and to be “fiercer in their actions” (Book II, Chapter 2) and Giovio’s on “military discipline”—“regulated with such justice and severity by the Turks that we may say that theirs surpasses that of the ancient Greeks and the Romans”, thus making them “better than our soldiers”—provoked irritated responses and vibrant debate. This association of the Ottomans with the Romans was also taken up by other authors in sometimes surprising ways.²⁰ More generally, it left a lasting mark on the political culture of the early modern world, revealing, as John Najemy noted several years ago, how unfounded are those interpretations that highlight the supposedly central role of Machiavelli in elaborating an idea of Europe by contrast with Asia, fostered by the opposition between the historical trajectory of the former, characterised by the presence of many small states fighting each other, and the latter, distinguished by the appearance of great empires.²¹

If it was precisely the positive opinion on the Ottoman Empire and its association with ancient Rome that caused intense and contrasting reactions, that is because it hit where it hurts those Iberian humanists who were celebrating the construction of the global empires of Portugal and Spain.²² Readers of this volume need not, then, be surprised to learn that the earliest documented reading and possession of Machiavelli’s work in America, in the late sixteenth century, was profoundly related to the

debate about the “Turk”, which in the following decades was to become the main term of reference through which the other Islamic empires were observed and understood—and sometimes openly admired—by European authors. In this way, Machiavelli’s writings, and *The Prince* in particular, started circulating across the Islamic world well before their earliest translations, from the late eighteenth century on, with notable results on both the glossary and the categories adopted to express his ideas, as well as their effects on the making of modern Muslim political thought.

The current volume is divided into three sections, each of which consists of three chapters. The contributing authors, who were given wide latitude with regard to approach, produced a compelling range of studies, from the history of reading to the analysis of the translations, the investigation of the textual interpolations and reversals, but also exercises of comparison between Machiavelli and his contemporaries.

The first section of the volume (*From Readings to Readers*) probes the link between some Arabic backgrounds of Machiavelli’s education and the reception of his writings by authors who dealt with Islam and the Ottoman Empire after him. *The Prince* was greatly indebted to the most widespread Pseudo-Aristotelian work in late medieval Europe, the *Kitāb sirr al-asrār*, written in eighth century Syria and translated into Latin and many European languages under the title *Secretum secretorum* (*Secret of Secrets*). Unlike the European tradition of the “mirror for princes” (*specula principum*) and similarly to *The Prince*, in the *Kitāb sirr al-asrār* Aristotle offers to his pupil, the future Alexander the Great, pragmatic advice on the decisions to be made in concrete situations. As Lucio Biasiori demonstrates in his chapter, the presence of this Muslim source in Machiavelli explains some similarities between *The Prince* and Arab political thought, and might also have paved the way for an easier and more penetrating reception of his writings in the Islamic world, where they were not perceived as a radical novelty. In the meantime, they became a point of reference for interpreting and describing the Ottoman Empire and other Muslim powers, interacting with works that seemingly belonged to very different cultural and political traditions. If we follow this thread, moving from Machiavelli’s readings to the writings by readers of Machiavelli, we can observe to what extent they recovered and developed the cross-cultural comparative potential of *The Prince* and the *Discourses*. Machiavelli’s brief but insightful remarks on political, administrative and military aspects of the Islamic world provoked

lively debate and sharp reactions in Italy and Spain—a land where a deadly attack on the medieval coexistence among the three religions of the Book (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) had been launched by King Ferdinand II of Aragon (r. 1479–1516), whom Machiavelli famously describes as the boldest monarch of his times, acting under the “cloak of religion”, as he stresses in Chapter 21 of *The Prince*.²³ In his chapter, Vincenzo Lavenia investigates this line in the sixteenth century reception of Machiavelli by the Italian humanist Paolo Giovio. A possible acquaintance of the Florentine secretary, Giovio allows us to connect the historical context in which Machiavelli lived with the earliest reaction to his writings. Giovio’s importance consists in having grasped Machiavelli’s ambivalent attitude regarding the Ottomans, which he transformed into a more general position towards the complex relations between politics and religion, as well as between just war and empire, in early modern Europe.

There were also a number of Italian and French readers of Machiavelli who variously readapted his teachings to many questions. In his chapter, Carlo Ginzburg tracks the re-appropriation of *The Prince* and, above all, of the *Discourses* by sixteenth century French antiquarians, establishing how their study of classical antiquity—considered as early ethnography, following in the footsteps of Arnaldo Momigliano—extensively drew on Machiavelli’s comparative approach. Although its specific focus is not the Islamic world, this chapter is a cornerstone of the volume, since it demonstrates that the intersection of Machiavelli’s writings with the reflection on the New World shaped a fresh attitude towards cultural diversity, which also encompassed the Muslims. This new trend was characterised by the use of Machiavelli’s remarks on the Romans as a term of comparison not only for judging and, sometimes, condemning or rejecting political and religious novelties emerging from the newly explored lands, but also for deciphering beliefs and customs in empires with which centuries-old relations, more or less hostile, existed. The creative recovery of Machiavelli’s writings by European humanists, missionaries and travellers, in order to establish comparisons, particularly with Islamic powers, is the main topic of the second section of the volume (*Religions and Empires*). The application of quotations and the rephrasing of Machiavelli’s statements and themes to the Muslim world are considered as manifestations of the global spread of his works and ideas. An early example concerns the first translation of the Qur’ān in a European vernacular language by Giovanni Battista Castrodardo, which is included in the *Alcorano di Macometto*, published in Venice by Andrea Arrivabene

in 1547. In his chapter, Pier Mattia Tommasino assesses the influence of the portrait of Muḥammad as an ‘armed prophet’, derived from a particular reading of *The Prince*, on this version of the Qur’ān, understanding it as a more general turning point in the European representation of the founder of Islam. Such a process, which involved humanists and translators before and after Machiavelli, paralleled the assimilation of Ottoman sultans to Roman emperors, which marked some political circles at the time of Süleymān, reaffirming significant cultural connections across the Mediterranean. While in Istanbul the Caesarisation of the sultan became a tool of legitimation for the Ottoman power, in the Italian peninsula Muḥammad’s assimilation to a wise lawgiver prepared the ground for a new, more positive attitude towards the figure of the prophet, who had hitherto been considered either a trickster or a heretic.

The Machiavellian Muḥammad marked a turning point in the long tradition of his legend in Europe, intersecting themes and aspirations circulating at the court of the Ottoman sultan. But when Jesuit missionaries appeared before the Mughal emperor Jahangir in the early seventeenth century, they could not resist the temptation to insert a substantial number of passages from the dedication of *The Prince* to Lorenzo de’ Medici, Duke of Urbino, in the Persian version of a political treatise that one of them, Jerónimo Xavier, wrote in collaboration with Mulla ‘Abdus Sattar ibn Qasim Lahauri. As Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam reveal in their chapter, that work, titled *Ādāb al-Saltanat* (“Manual for Kings”) and replete with references to episodes of Eurasian history, then follows a path very different from that of Machiavelli, trying to provide Jahangir with an exemplar of a pious prince. This treatise contains our first evidence of passages derived from *The Prince* in a text written in a Muslim land. Therefore, it can be seen as a variation on the equivocal literature produced at the time in Europe by prominent members of the Society of Jesus, who were engaged in confuting Machiavelli without wholly repudiating the ideas and questions on which he had so deeply left his mark in the political culture of the period.

The dissemination of Machiavelli’s writings following the threads of their multiple connections with the Islamic world was not restricted to north Africa and Asia, but took on a global character as early as the sixteenth century, again by virtue of the magnetic attraction of their pages on the Turk. In his chapter, Giuseppe Marcocci determines that it was precisely the association of Machiavelli’s scattered reflections on the colonies and his insights into the Ottoman Empire that facilitated the

recovery of his works along the itineraries of the Iberian explorations. Thus, after the early debate in the 1530 and 1540s about the provocative statement that the Romans owed their greatness to their “false religion” and the modern heirs of their military valour were not the Christian, but the Turkish soldiers, we can track traces of the reading of Machiavelli’s works on a global scale. These range from the peculiar ideas about the Ottoman sultan expressed by Raffaele Olivi, a Florentine settler in late sixteenth century Brazil, to the Venetian Nicolò Manuzzi’s intimate description of the Mughal court, along the lines of the pages in *The Prince* on the “monarchy of the Turk”, provided in the various drafts of the *Storia del Mogol*, which he composed in India in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Not only European authors, however, used Machiavelli to interpret, or misinterpret, Islam and the East, as the third and final section of this volume (*Beyond Orientalism*) posits, offering a major contribution to the study of cross-cultural political thought in the early and late modern period. A bureaucrat and author of historical works, Celâlzâde Muşafâ (ca. 1490–1567) was a contemporary of Machiavelli, and together they can be considered as a case of early modern “parallel lives”. This is what Kaya Şahin affirms in his chapter. The similarities (and differences) between these two figures have escaped the notice of those who study them separately, confining them to distinct cultural traditions. But a comprehensive exploration of individual trajectories as a special resource for global history makes it possible to restore many connections between the topics discussed by Muşafâ and Machiavelli, as well as the solutions they proposed.

The rapid circulation of Machiavelli’s writings across the Islamic world was followed by their translation into Ottoman Turkish and Arabic from the second half of the eighteenth century on, thus contributing to the emergence of a new political vocabulary in the modern Islamic world. In her chapter, Nergiz Yılmaz Aydoğdu presents the results of her discovery of the first translation of *The Prince* into Ottoman Turkish among the manuscripts of the Topkapı Palace Museum Library (Istanbul). The probable fruit of collaboration between a dragoman called Herbert (to be identified with Thomas Herbert, a descendant of a Catholic family long since emigrated from the British Isles to Constantinople) and a Turkish assistant, the work was written in a period of crisis for the Ottoman Empire, which had been weakened by the war against Russia. The quest for political and military renewal drove Sultan Muşafâ III

(r. 1757–1774) to encourage a version of *Anti-Machiavel* (1740), a refutation of *The Prince* written by King Frederick II of Prussia with Voltaire's help. The fact that *Anti-Machiavel* includes the text it criticises made its translation Machiavelli's official entrance to the Ottoman world. A close reading of this manuscript discloses a complex adaptation of *The Prince* to the Ottoman political reality: the effort to make this treatise comprehensible to its new Turkish readers is evident in the translation of keywords such as “prince”, “state”, or *virtù*.

A second, fundamental step was the first Arabic translation of *The Prince*, conceived in 1832 at the court of Muḥammad ‘Alī (r. 1769–1849) in Cairo, which was still under Ottoman authority. According to Elisabetta Benigni's reconstruction, the translation was connected to Muḥammad ‘Alī's effort to modernize Egypt through a series of economic, political and cultural reforms that aimed to emulate those witnessed by Europe, and ought to be understood in the context of the current Mediterranean spread of discourse about the idea of the nation in the aftermath of Napoleonic expeditions. A careful analysis of this translation reveals that the attempt to adapt *The Prince* to the first half of nineteenth century was less determined than in the Ottoman Turkish case, although Islamic political thought in Arabic confronted completely new concepts, starting from that of “nation”, which Machiavelli himself contributed to circulating. In so doing, the basis was also laid for the rise of nationalism across the Muslim world, which in the past century has contributed to the emergence of an anti-colonial resistance, but also to the return to the rhetoric of clash between West and East, whose effects are before us.

Our proposal to reorient Machiavelli, thus, can be read as an invitation to recover historical knowledge concerning the constitutive contribution made by the author of *The Prince* to the emergence of a new approach to political and military issues in the Islamic world. Such an inquiry will take the many divergent directions of a largely forgotten circulation and reception.

NOTES

1. S. Rushdie (2008), *The Enchantress of Florence* (London: Random House).
2. For a short analysis of the novel see D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke (2010), *Salman Rushdie*, 2nd ed. (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan): 177–184.
3. We quote Rushdie's words from an interview about his novel, by J. Kidd, “A Machiavellian obsession”, *The Jerusalem Post*, 13 June 2008, 26.

4. The reference is to Q. Skinner (1978), *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press). On this point see also D. Armitage (2013), *Foundations of Modern International Thought* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press), 3–8.
5. Samuel P. Huntington never actually quotes Machiavelli in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996), but the title of the book review by W. Gungwu, “A Machiavelli for Our Times”, *The National Interest*, 46, Winter 1996–1997, 69–73, is telling.
6. Rather than stretching improperly the problematic notion of Renaissance, as suggested by J. Goody (2010), *Renaissances: The One or the Many?* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press), we aim to show that its historical manifestations owe many features to the interaction with non-European cultures.
7. This volume is also a contribution to the study of the translations of *The Prince*. On this issue see R. De Pol (ed.) (2010), *The First Translations of Machiavelli's Prince: From the Sixteenth to the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi).
8. Among the others, see G. MacLean (ed.) (2005), *Re-Orienting the Renaissance: Cultural Exchanges with the East* (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan), N. Matar (2009), *Europe through Arab Eyes, 1578–1727* (New York: Columbia University Press), and A. Contadini and C. Norton (eds) (2013), *The Renaissance and the Ottoman World* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate). For an overview with a special focus on Italy see F. Trivellato (2010), “Renaissance Italy and the Muslim Mediterranean in Recent Historical Work”, *Journal of Modern History* 82, no. 1, 127–155.
9. A case in point is the presentation of Machiavelli's thought alongside that of Erasmus and Luther, in A. Pippidi (2012), *Visions of the Ottoman World in Renaissance Europe* (London: Hurst): 65–118. Despite its recent publication, the book is heavily indebted to the old literature about European representations of the Turk. On the three Islamic empires see D.E. Steusand (2011), *Islamic Gunpowder Empires: Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals* (Boulder: Westview Press).
10. M. Meserve (2008), *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press): 9. See also N. Bisaha (2004), *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press): 177–178.
11. It is the author herself who clarifies it in the endnote. See *ibidem*, 261: “In his account of Ottoman governance in *The Prince*, Chapter 4”.

12. N. Machiavelli (1989), *The Chief Works and Others*, ed. and trans. Allan Gilbert, 3 vols. (Durham and London; Duke University Press): Vol. I, 21.
13. For a general overview see S. Anglo (2005), *Machiavelli, the First Century: Studies in Enthusiasm, Hostility, and Irrelevance* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press): 325–373. Machiavelli's name does not appear in the recent book by P. Barthe (2016), *French Encounters with the Ottomans, 1510–1560* (London and New York: Routledge).
14. G. Poumarède (2004), *Pour en finir avec la croisade: Mythes et réalités de la lutte contre les Turcs aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France). Of course, a fundamental sphere was that of the relations with the Ottoman Empire, which contributed to the emergence of a new diplomacy in Europe: D. Goffman (2007), “Negotiating with the Renaissance State: The Ottoman Empire and the New Diplomacy”, in: V.H. Aksan and D. Goffman (eds), *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press): 61–74.
15. Machiavelli, *The Chief Works*, Vol. I, 76.
16. Ibidem, Vol. II, 880. The translation has been slightly modified.
17. Ibidem, Vol. I, 21 (*The Prince*) and 508 (*Discourses*), respectively. Machiavelli's informant is likely to be identified with his nephew Giovanni Vernacci.
18. Ibidem, Vol. I, 260.
19. Ibidem, Vol. I, 245.
20. P. Giovio (2005), *Commentario de le cose de' turchi*, ed. L. Michelacci (Bologna: Clueb): 169: “La disciplina militar è con tanta giustitia et severità regulata da' turchi che si può dir che avanzino quella de gli antichi greci et romani”. Machiavelli is quoted from his *The Chief Works*, Vol. I, 331.
21. J.M. Najemy (2009), “Machiavelli between East and West”, in: D. Ramada Curto et al. (eds), *From Florence to the Mediterranean and Beyond: Essays in Honour of Anthony Molho* (Florence: Olschki): 127–145: 128–129. In particular, Najemy is thinking of the arguments presented by F. Chabod (1961), *Storia dell'idea d'Europa*, ed. E. Sestan and A. Saitta (Bari: Laterza): 49–52, and, more recently, by T. Hentsch (1992), *Imagining the Middle East*, trans. F.A. Reed (Montreal: Black Rose Books): 63–65.
22. A. Prosperi (2010), “La religione, il potere, le élites: Incontri italo-spagnoli nell'età della Controriforma”, in his *Eresie e devozioni*, 3 vols. (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura): Vol. I, 61–85.
23. Machiavelli, *The Chief Works*, Vol. I, 81.

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PART I

From Readings to Readers

Islamic Roots of Machiavelli's Thought? *The Prince* and the *Kitāb sirr al-asrār* from Baghdad to Florence and Back

Lucio Biasiori

“THE MOST POPULAR BOOK OF THE MIDDLE AGES”?

Many scholars have speculated on the resemblance between Islamic and Machiavellian political thought. Answers have been quite varied, however. Some historians have been satisfied with nationalistic ones: for instance, translating into French the *Raḡāʾiq al-hilāl fī daḡāʾiq al-ḥiyāl* (“Book of Stratagems”, late thirteenth century), the French-Lebanese intellectual René Khawam has stated that this work proves the political ability of Arabic politicians one century before Machiavelli.¹ Others, like Jocelyne Dakhliā, have simply dismissed the problem, deciding “not to dwell on the pertinence of such an assimilation”.² More usefully, Antony Black has looked for “Machiavellian ideas in the Muslim Advice to Kings literature”, assuming that they “derived from Indo-Iranian sources”, but has concluded that they were unknown to Machiavelli.³ More recently, Linda Darling has tried to overcome the *impasse* by attributing the similarities between western and eastern mirrors for princes—as works giving

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