Machiavelli's Walls: The Legacy of Realism in International Relations Theory

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Abstract

In this paper we argue that Niccolò Machiavelli has little to do with Realism in International Relations theory. By concentrating, as Machaivelli did, on the walls that define political relations—both inside and outside the polity—we find his insights deeply rooted in the specific political contexts of Sixteenth century Italy. Others may wish to generalize from them, but Machiavelli did not. In fact, as we show, Machiavelli was mindful of the difficulties of generalizing about walls and acknowledged the dangers political actors faced in navigating between the internal and external walls of the polity. We examine the geopolitical contours of Machiavelli's walls and seek to demonstrate how morality is present in these historical spaces. In contrast to Realists, Machiavelli was ready and willing to make ethical judgments. We argue that theorists of international politics should exercise care in reaching for Machiavelli as the iconic thinker for making sense of anarchy in world politics. This article concludes by suggesting that the ideology of Machiavellianism has obscured deeper understanding of the particular contexts of Machiavelli's own world.

Biography

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<div align="right">No complex thinker fits his adjective
Wight (2005)</div>

The tension between 'realists' and 'utopians' is one of the dominant legacies of early Twentieth Century theories of international politics. Taking human nature as it really is and extrapolating the institutional significance of this presumed account of human nature for the collective ordering of humanity is one of the primary ways in which political realism invokes Reality with a capital 'R' to interpret world politics. Realist thinking on the nature of the discipline is distilled from traditions of grand scholarship that reach beyond time, space and place in order to reveal the reality of political actors and political systems, a reality that the actors themselves may not themselves perceive. These traditions claim to proffer to the world eternal and immutable truths of international politics. Invoked selectively, they lend credibility to the narrative of political realism in which the state is the decisive political actor against the backdrop of systemic anarchy and its chronic insecurity. Despite the relative infancy of international relations theory it has sought to understand the past, present and future through a myriad of theoretical, historical and methodological formations: from the ancients to the moderns, from the scientific to the humanistic, from the religious to the institutional.

Collecting theories is part of the disciplinary landscape of international relations. As Leszek Kolakowski (1990) remarked, 'those who hate gardening need a theory' by which he meant that a theory adds depth and profundity even if it adds nothing more. While our subject is not gardening, we note that there is a gardening book that uses Niccolò Machiavelli's name (Crick, 2011), one example of how widely and freely his name is used. We do, nonetheless, hope to evoke a similar concern expressed by Kolakowski about the ideological status of theories for making sense (or lending credibility) to particular accounts of world politics. Should one have the audacity to consult SparkNotes (Editors, 2002), so often consulted by students, there one finds that Machiavelli 'advised rulers to use deceit and violence as tools against other states.' Implicit in such claims is an assumption that Machiavelli has offered the discipline of International Relations just such a sensational (and accurate) account of human nature that his presence in the canon of international relations theory would serve as a constant reminder why anarchy is the essential and defining feature of realist accounts of international politics. That said, we hope to demonstrate a deeper complexity to Machiavelli's thinking than merely a footnote to political realism for he was an astute observer of strategic political action and knew well its tragic consequences.

Walls, friends, and enemies

A preoccupation with the ontological status of anarchy (Bull 1977) — its origins, workings and increasingly its limits — is one of the primary starting points for students of international politics: Anarchy is what states make of it. Anarchy is the enduring reality of the international system. Anarchy turns us into beasts. Anarchy compels states (and sometimes their citizens) to seek out the conditions of security. We stress the role of anarchy for the discipline as a whole, to emphasize the fact that the modern state (as the primary vehicle and expression of modern political rationality) is a historically contingent form that Machiavelli neither anticipated, perceived, nor understood. Ergo, we highlight the risks in embracing Machiavelli as a grand philosopher for both political realism and the broader field of world politics.

In this paper we examine how scholarship, which takes anarchy as the ontological condition of realist international politics, has selectively mobilized Machiavelli for the sake

of legitimating a vision of international politics in which the governing norm is 'the concept of interest defined in terms of power' (Morgenthau, 1948, 4-15 and Morgenthau 1947, 175-176; cf. Wendt 1992, 391). In assessing the dominant status of anarchy for international politics we note that international theory has progressively moved from conceptions of human nature to the interactions between 'structure and process' in making sense of international politics. A crucial aspect of the debate between 'realists' and 'utopians' turns on questions about the order of international discourse and how states feature as the primary unit of analysis in thinking about the layering of international politics. In taking states as the primary unit of analysis there is a tendency to engage in what Ken Booth referred to as 'heritage' international relations. As Booth (1995, 108) argues, the academic privileging of realism has meant that "[t]he subject has been dominated by fatalists about human nature or political structures whose 'explanations' add to our sorrows by their verdicts that our destinies are inescapable.' Machiavelli is routinely identified as a forerunner of political realism. As Patrick Stewart (2014) put it in the *National Interest* '[f]ive centuries later his primer [The Prince] on statecraft remains required if unsettling reading for practitioners and students of politics.'

In Chapter XV of *The Prince*, Machiavelli considered the place of virtue in statecraft. Things that ostensibly appear virtuous may, despite good intentions, be ruinous to a prince. Similarly, things 'that are seemingly bad, which, if followed by a prince, procure his peace and security.' Good may come from evil as evil may come from good, an observation made by Max Weber in 'Politics as a Vocation' (1946 [1919], 122) that sums up a dimension of Machiavelli's thinking about the interaction of politics and ethics. Weber, like Machiavelli, calls for finer judgments of the dynamic between ethics and politics rather than a simple antithesis. In contrast, reductionist accounts of Machiavelli's work strictly separate politics and morality.

Walls, external and internal, offer a key to much of Machiavelli's intention. In understanding how and why walls emerge, and the purposes they serve will enhance Machiavelli's contribution to world politics.

In what follows we dwell on Machiavelli's world and on his own words, rather than accept the routine categorization of Machiavelli as a realist in the terms conventionally associated with international relations theory (e.g., Waltz, 1959; Evans, 1972; Gilpin, 1981; Brown, 1992; Booth, 1996; Doyle, 1997; Crawford, 2000; Mearsheimer, 2001; and many more). Seconding the efforts of others like Steven Forde (1992 and 1995), we hope to temper the glib generalizations often drawn from his remarks. Machiavelli was a close observer of a political world dominated by personalities and personal rule. The threats of campaigning armies made him think hard about what could be done by a small, independent city to secure itself. Machiavelli did not generalize to other times and places (in fact, it is his realist acolytes who have subsequently universalized his work), but rather he concentrated on the dire needs of his time and place. We approach Machiavelli as a high-context writer (Hall, 1976), that is, he rooted his thoughts in the context of his experience and did not seek to generalize beyond that, but rather to bring such generalizations as there were to bear on the context. He did not have the appetite for philosophical speculation that, say, underlies the political theories of Thomas Hobbes or Jean-Jacques Rousseau. This lack of appetite is apparent from his works, and it is worth remembering that neither *The Prince* nor *The Discourses* were written for publication. Machiavelli did not possess the foresight to look over the horizon to imagine developments like the modern state. Nor did he lay down principles to found a school of political thought now commonly referred to as political realism. He did not aspire to reveal abstract and universal claims about 'power' and 'the political'; rather his aim was to find the tools to cope with the world in which he lived and, above all else, to provide context to the political.

In Machiavelli's time and place politics was about the life and death of the leader and the primacy of maintaining one's regime in the face of adversity. If the prince was displaced

by an internal rival or an external enemy, then more than likely the everyone suffered. Michel Foucault (1990, 88-89 and 94; see Schaap 2000) declared the need figuratively to cut off the king's head to make sovereignty impersonal, but the politics in Machiavelli's time meant that regime change more often than not meant literal death for many innocent bystanders. For a contemporary illustrations of this kind of politics we have only to watch the evening news from so-called failed regimes around the world, Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Mexico, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, or Zaire. These are windows on Machiavelli's world where everything is at stake and nothing is secure. In contrast to such fragile worlds, most readers of this journal live in settled and ordered societies in which procedures take priority over the very terms of political discourse, all very far removed the frangible world of Machiavelli. Our durable political worlds are notable for their incrementalism and moderation. Regime change at elections, policy changes after elections, neither is followed by political murder. Our politics is the routine mark zoning disputes, concern about illegal immigration, funding formulas for higher education, legality of LGBTQ marriage, compulsory bottle return fees, preservation of bird sanctuaries, privacy of internet metadata…the list goes on and on. Though many of the protagonists in these matters will declare that the issues are life and death, they pale in contrast to living and dying in failed regimes. To return to Machiavelli own failed regime, when Girolamo Savonarola, together with two acolytes, was hanged and burned, a spectacle that Machiavelli probably witnessed just a few days before he began work at the Chancellery, he saw political life exposed to its core. In Savonarola's world there were no erudite seminars on semantics of *virtù*, *fortuna*, and free will. In Machiavelli's Florence threats were literal not figurative, factual not metaphorical, immediate not distant, today and not tomorrow, certain not possible, visible not abstract. In Machiavelli's world the blood was on the floor, on the walls, and definitely on one's hands. Dirty hands (Walzer, 1973) or 'blood on the floor' was not the trivial figure of speech that it has become for lazy journalists today (e.g., Thomas 2015). There was nothing metaphorical about reference to for Machiavelli, who knew of Cesare Borgia's spectacular murder of his own lieutenant Ramiro Lorqua. Indeed, Machiavelli arrived on the scene himself within hours of the deed and saw the corpse (Ridolfi, 1963, 62: cf. *The Prince* Chapter VII).

The External Walls
    'Good fences make good neighbors,' the poet Robert Frost wrote twice in 'Mending Wall' (1914, 11-12), though he admitted that 'something there is that doesn't love a wall' and even that 'we do not need a wall' but the two neighbors in the poem do build the dry stone wall that divides a field between them. Politics has its walls: The Berlin Wall, Hadrian's Wall, the West Bank Barrier in Israel, the Maginot Line, the Secure Fence along the Mexican border in Arizona, the Great Wall of China, the Demilitarized Zone in Korea, in Kashmir, and on the Green Line in Cyprus — these are walls between nation states. None of these walls are the product of the cooperation of friendly neighbors as Frost portrayed. Walls come in different shapes and sizes and serve different purposes, from the mundane to the geopolitical. Walls can make good neighbors in two ways. First external walls can reduce conflict among neighbors as some of the examples above show and they can channel interaction through portals. Second internal walls within a polity can promote harmony in part by keeping people away from each other. While our focus is on the former, external walls, the two kinds of walls do connect and we will comment on this, too, in a minor key.
    In 1526, after writing the manuscripts of *The Prince* and *The Discourses*, he was recalled from enforced retirement and assigned duty as the secretary of the *Procuratori delle Mura* (literally, Officials of the Walls). It was a committee to evaluate the status of the external, defensive walls of Florence in case of attack and to recommend improvements. Machiavelli, then fifty-seven years old, but twelve months from his death, threw himself into the task and kept at it (Capponi, 2010, 275; Ridolfi., 1963, 227). The secretary was the

executive officer of the committee. This was his last service to Florence, but walls had long been on his mind. In The Prince he had mused on fortifications and fortresses in Chapter XX, concluding that walls were no substitute for motivated citizen army. In *The Discourses* (Book II, 17), he noted that 'no walls, no matter how great' can long keep foreign cannons at bay. In addition to these private reflections in these manuscripts unpublished in his lifetime, Machiavelli also addressed walls in the one book he had intended for publication, namely, *The Art of War* in Book III (92-3 and 95), where he concluded that skillful opponents always find a way to overcome fortifications, as the Romans found a way to deal with Hannibal's moving wall of elephants. Yet he also knew from bitter personal experience that the walls of Pisa resisted Florentine attacks far too long, while the walls at Prato had been no match for Spanish cannons. There was no generalization in those two contrasting experiences. In the one case walls were effective, in the other they were not. Some walls crumble, whilst others stand the test for a time, at least. The world of experience does not offer ready generalizations.

Machiavelli is often cited as a writer who embodied the modern art of diplomacy (e.g., Berridge, 2001). One of Machiavelli's primary diplomatic goals was a wall around Florence, one that kept out its enemies. To the already existing local rivals foreigners had recently been added to the political mix with an influx of French, Spanish, or German (and Swiss) armies onto the Florentine scene. The combinations of these threats were numerous and deadly, and ever changing as alliances came and went. If Florence had secure outside walls, then ordinary life could go inside those walls with conflict and competition limited (Walker, 1993). It is necessary to resolve internal disputes without rupturing the external walls.

Channeling, mediating and resolving internal conflicts so that they do not jeopardize the strength of external walls is a significant test for any political system as it lives out the *problematique* (Foucault, 2009 [1977-1978]) of its security politics. The walls of the city must withstand many pressures, internal as well as external: whether pikes, battering rams, cannons, scaling ladders, catapult shots, or the possibility of a long siege. As threats to the walls of the city have evolved, so too has technology in response to new types of assaults. Not only is such engineering specialized, it is also expensive. A twelve-foot thick wall might be just the thing to blunt cannon balls and catapult shots. A cantilevered wall might discourage the use of scaling ladders. Military engineering is not, however, necessary for internal walls. The difference between external and internal walls is readily to hand in nearly any dwelling. The external walls are built to withstand the weather — rain, winds, burning sun, heavy snow, ice, hail, flying debris, and so on.

Aristotle remarked in the first book of *The Politics* that politics is the community within which all other communities exist; it is the shell around all other communities and that is echoed with a special urgency by Machiavelli in *The Discourses*: 'when the safety of one's country is at stake' nothing else matters but its salvation (Book I, Chapters III and XII). The security of walls (against both internal and external threats) means that when confronted with an emergency it may be necessary to suspend, violate, or disregard the normal operation of entrenched regime of laws, rights and freedoms. In states of emergency internal questions of justice are secondary to the external survival of political community.

Earlier we asserted that Machiavelli was a high-context writer. Perhaps we can now explain that assertion if we liken him to a cricket commentator, focused entirely on the game at hand. Though the commentator may know a great deal about the game, its history, its possibilities, patterns in play, strategic alternatives, and more, the commentator confines the commentary to the play that is happening on the day itself. If fast bowlers are at work the commentator does not elaborate on leg spin bowling. Though *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack* enumerates more than three hundred field-placings, the commentator discusses only those pertinent to the day's play, i.e., the context. This kind of focus is what Machiavelli applied to the politics of his day. That politics was not every kind of possibility to be found in a reference work like *Wisden's* but only the personal rule and empires of his time and place.

To abstract and reify from one cricket broadcaster's comments to a theory of cricket, well that would be a mistake. It is a mistake to be avoided in the case of Machiavelli, too. Machiavelli is a student of the political game as he saw it played in the here and now, not as it could or might be played on another day in other contexts. For this reason, extrapolating a comprehensive theory of international politics from Machiavelli's writings distorts his insights. His paternity of political realism is not a simple matter of a DNA test, though even these can err. The entrenched (realist) dualism between ethics and politics clearly has methodological significance for the discipline of International Relations but this is not a division to be found in Machiavelli's works. The moral question for Machiavelli is significantly more complex than that suggested by renderings in political science textbooks.

E. H. Carr in his enduring *The Twenty Year's Crisis* (1964 [1939], 63-65) identified Machiavelli as one of the first political realists and the label stuck. Carr found three fundamental 'tenets' in Machiavelli's 'doctrine' that provide a basis to understand the primary features of realist philosophy: (a) Machiavelli's account of history implicitly rejects utopian accounts of order, establishing the priority of historical cause and effect over normative accounts of political order; (b) Machiavelli derived theory from practice, rather than deriving practice from theory; and (c) Machiavelli established the ascendance of the political over morality, recognizing (along with Hobbes) that morality always derives from politics. As Carr argued there, 'Machiavelli recognized the importance of morality, but thought that there could be no effective morality where there was no effective authority.' Taken together, Carr's endorsement of Machiavelli as the progenitor of modern realism advanced a scientific account of both national and international history, and implicitly rejected utopianism in considering the role of theory in world politics, and offered a segmented understanding of international politics in which morality and ethics are always counterposed to politics.

Whilst Carr acknowledged the legacy of Enlightenment thinking in shaping traditions of political realism (especially the belief in human progress) there is still an implicit understanding that the enduring ethic of the international system is inherently anti-progressivist; in short, anarchy cannot be overcome. This constitutive ethic of international politics operates in such a way that establishing a common basis both *of* and *for* agreement between states, territories and peoples is impossible. Carr phrased this constitutive ethic in terms of the realist critique of liberal interwar internationalism. The notion that there can be a harmony of interests amongst different political actors at the global level is not readily accepted amongst realists. Deploying universalist or humanitarian doctrines for the sake of 'truth' or 'justice' is problematic within this realist ontology. Distaste for the notion of de-contextualized universal truths is thereby taken to be a grounding ethic of international relations. What follows from this assumption is an account of international politics in which antagonistic states actively jockey for power in the absence of a 'common interest in peace.' For Carr, reading the international system in terms of the conditions of cause and effect within world history has meant that international history depends on the constellations of friends and enemies within the world system. This is an unstated assumption of Carr's reading of interest in international politics, which along with the likes of Carl Schmitt (1996[1938]), warns against universalizing the particular within international politics. For assuming a commonality of interests — shared across time, space and historical location — entails a neglect of the political economy of enmity within international politics. As Schmitt suggests, the most we can hope for is 'mere coexistence' in world politics since the spatial practices of states disallow political commonalities and moral universals. As Carr observed, 'supposedly absolute and universal principles' are in fact reflections of the particular desires of individual states within the world system. In rejecting maximal accounts of international law, Carr concluded 'as soon as the attempt is made to apply these supposedly abstract principles to a concrete political situation, they are revealed as the transparent disguises of selfish vested interests.'

Carr's account of international politics rests upon a metaphor of friendship and enmity in order to understand politics among nation-states. For realists working from the positivist tradition, this bedrock has long established the state as the decisive international actor in which sovereignty is assessed through the relative distribution and exercise of power within the international system. The analogy of the billiard balls, the classic statement of power maximization within the realist tradition, involves the state 'acting with a single mind and single will' (Wolfers, 1951, 40). Machiavelli is often invoked to justify this account of international order, with the claim that he would always emphasize the divisions between states (often taken as a substitute for principalities) as the primary basis for assessing the international system. What is overlooked in this rendering of Machiavelli — as the foundational realist thinker — is the importance of reading Machiavelli in his own context to see both his complexity and his irony. That is to say, assuming that the absence of a common moral order, following Carr, results in the absence of communal bonds within the world system is to flatten the account of the world system to little more than a game of tin soldiers. What is universal in this account of world politics, continues Wolfers, is the 'egoistical pursuit of power' in which states compete for power as part of a 'continuous and inescapable struggle for survival.' Nonetheless, to presume that the conditions of world politics in the middle of the Twentieth Century map onto early Renaissance Italy is problematic for realist thinking. Not only does this overlay presume issue-orthodoxy (that is, the problem of anarchy will always be the problem, irrespective of time, place and geopolitical location) but, more importantly, it establishes a relational ethic of state conduct in which those outside the walls, the Other, must always be enemies: 'there can be no amity between them, unless it is be an alignment against a common foe' (Wolfers, 1951).

John Agnew (1994, 65) has warned against equating the city-state of Machiavelli's context with the contemporary state system which international relations theory has established as the guiding norm for understanding world politics: 'The European medieval world was one of local and hierarchical rather than territorial allegiances.' In adopting a critical outlook to the territorial basis of political community, Agnew warns students of world politics to avoid collapsing time and space into a single moment in which the state is the manifestation of international rationality. Further Agnew (1994, 69) noted that it was only in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries that the imperative of state survival (defending, maintaining, and extending the state) became the dominant norm of international politics. This imperative of state survival carried with it a concomitant assumption that the borders of the state would be synonymous with the domestic contours of society, concluded Agnew (1994, 69): 'Only inside the state territory is there social order; outside is anarchy and danger.' Borders, these are the outside walls of the polity.

We say 'polity' and not 'state' because we have concluded, along with Agnew above, that states, as we know them today, did not exist in Machiavelli's world. France was well on the way to becoming a state and Spain was not far behind but neither had arrived during Machiavelli's lifetime at that development. Whilst we have no desire to argue about the definition of a 'state' we assume that a state in contemporary meaning, includes ongoing institutions and entrenched practices with a defined territory that outlive any incumbent (Mansfield, 1983). In contrast to these stable political regimes, we have the fragile worlds of leadership and leaders in Machiavelli's time. These leaders included the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, the Popes, that unarmed prophet Savonarola, Medicis many, the one and only Catharina Sforza, Italian warlords and princelings by the score, and most of all the extraordinary Cesare Borgia and his famous sister Lucrezia: none of whom can be described as states, state actors, or any of their equivalent. Their actions, achievements, rule were personal, not institutional. On any coherent definition the state, Machiavelli had no inkling of it. For Machiavelli politics sprang from the mind and energy of the leader (in the tradition of Plutarch), not the inertia of settled practices we associate with the state today.

Of course, with hindsight we know something Machiavelli did not know, the state was emerging at that time with an enduring command of territory, a continuity that transcended personalities, and a capacity to apply resources concentrated on scales not theretofore seen in human history. This hindsight does not mean Machiavelli, however insightful he was, anticipated the nation-state. Rather Machiavelli was run over by history, that is, the cities of Italy were run over by the nascent nation-states of France and Spain. The independent cities that today remain like Monaco, San Marino, Singapore, and the Vatican remind us just how small a city-state was.

Establishing the contingency—whether temporal, spatial, or historical—of the contemporary state makes it hard to reach back to the city-states of Renaissance times for a theory of international politics suitable for the dangers and risks of the contemporary world. Yet many early scholars of international relations theory have drawn upon Machiavelli as a means of expressing the geopolitical quagmire and security dilemmas of the Cold War.

The Internal Walls

Machiavelli's references to life within the walls are few. Like many intellectuals observing the workings of international political community, there is an assumption of a homogenous domesticity that is threatened by the world beyond the walls. This inside/outside conception of walled order has implications for the conduct of the prince within the city. Of course, every threat can be exaggerated and lies can be told. An unscrupulous prince can claim everything is crucial to the security of the outside walls. Yet a prince who cries 'Security!' too often loses credibility and support from within the city walls. However, it is salutary to remember that sometimes the external threat is lethal.

When the exterior walls are secure, politics is of no interest to citizens safely inside the those ramparts. Machiavelli supposed, having written that only a few citizens in any city will engage in politics, whatever the form of government. In *The Discourses* in Book I, Chapter 16 he estimated the number of politicians at forty or fifty. We propose to take him at his words, the more so since he had observed politics very closely as one among the politicians in Florence with its elaborate republican institutions (Najmey, 2006). Despite the participatory fora, despite the mandatory service, despite the elections to office, Machiavelli saw how hollow were the forms of participation in Florentine politics. We cannot fully describe the intricacies of Florentine politics in his time but in stable times the guild members (merchants and artisans) who qualified to participate in the republican institutions had no interest in doing so but preferred to maximize their businesses to make a profit by avoiding civic duties—like all those members of academic departments who seldom attend university meetings and even when physically present their hearts and minds are largely absent. Though entitled to participate, Florentine citizens overwhelmingly had other priorities. In Florence to cater for the other priorities of citizens the tenure of office was two months. The composition of the ruling council would change five times in a year, making the most vacillating contemporary democratic government seem stable. In peacetime most of the councilors would rather not be there, and in bad times there was nothing they could do but to pass blame back and forth, as most of us would do today.

While life within the walls must surrender primacy to the external walls in times of crisis, but ultimately the purpose of those walls is to make normal life possible within the house. Where secure walls exist established practices grow and in time these may pass into institutions creating one of the conditions that sustain the rule of law. Though we presume that Machiavelli had no such concept as 'rule of law,' despite the remarkable efforts of one writer to attribute it to him (Bobbitt, 2013), we use the term 'rule of law' merely to suggest order, reliability, and predictability in resolving disagreements within the boundaries of political community (Raeff, 1983) and nothing more technical or elaborate. Nevertheless there are rules, practices, conventions governing civil society and we liken these to the interior walls of a building. These interior walls) as a zone of relative homogeneity) are less

substantial than the external walls (as a zone of radical different). To some Realist the domain of ethics is within the walls, and that of politics is outside the walls. In Carr's words, it would be utopian to suppose that ethics has purchase outside the external walls. We see no such perfect divide in Machiavelli who finds the success of Agathocles dishonorable (*The Prince*, Chapter VIII) and as we presently shall see seeks a prince who must learn how not to be good.

Those living in a well-ordered society forget how difficult it is to create and sustain the conditions for order. The laboratories of failed regimes are a powerful reminder that the contours of political community, especially its walls, are essential for governing.

Machiavelli, Realism, and Human Nature

Theorists of realism in the discipline of International Relations often attribute a timeless quality to human nature and subsequently use this as a basis to make ontological claims about the structures of order and disorder in world politics. The tendency to invoke Machiavelli as an early theorist of human nature illustrates how dramatically the context has been taken out of the Machiavellian equation. To imagine that contemporary men have changed from those of ancient Rome wrote Machiavelli in *The Discourses* (Book III, Chapter 43) is to suppose that 'heaven, the sun…the elements… have changed their motions.' The reality of our human nature is a response to the types of threats faced by citizens as they negotiate the walls of political discourse, both internal and external. The brutality within human nature only emerges in rebellion against the internal walls or, more spectacularly, when threatened by outside forces that jeopardize the external walls. International Relations theories have focused on the outside walls, just as Machiavelli did. In a similar vein, conflict, violence and war have always taken precedence over the consensus, peace and virtue. In the annals of world politics, long-term harmony escapes rigorous dissection and analysis, either in the mass media or on the shelves of international political theory. The safe and sane is too boring for headlines. Titus Livy skipped generations of Roman order and calm to concentrate on the exciting part, like a scriptwriter today, who concentrates on the conflict and not the cooperation in a narrative.

Perhaps it is because of this preoccupation with conflict that theorists like Carr and Kenneth Waltz (1979, 79) are sure that Machiavelli stands as the key thinker for understanding the balance of power in world politics. For Waltz, Machiavelli's contribution to political realism is his awareness of the changing configurations of power. It is important to note that this specifically links to the question of order outside the city walls: namely, 'Machiavelli stands so clearly as the exponent of Realpolitik that one easily slips into thinking that he developed the closely associated idea of balance of power as well.' Though Waltz qualified this statement by noting that conceptions of balance of power are a more recent invention, specifically as they relate to the challenges states face as they negotiate both their internal and external walls.

In *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, Reinhold Niebuhr (1964 [1943], 277) argued that the Renaissance 'recognized the perils of conflict in the dynamic elements of social existence; but it was prompted by these insights to elaborate absolutistic theories of the state.' Niebuhr also identifies Machiavelli as a key thinker for establishing 'the doctrine of the moral autonomy for the state.' It is this ethic which leads to '[t]he pride of nations and the arrogance of self-deification of collective man' vis-à-vis Christianity and the church (218). In *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (2005 [1932], 62), Niebuhr averred that '[t]he man in the street, with his lust for power and prestige thwarted by his own limitations and the necessities of social life, projects his ego upon his nation and indulges his anarchic lusts vicariously.' In tracing genealogies of morality in political thought Alasdair MacIntyre (2007 [1981], 10) has also identified Machiavelli as a figure in political thought for whom there exists no established way of dealing with rival premises or truth claims apart from

conflict itself. It is Machiavelli's provision of an immutable account of human nature that has lit the eternal flame of desire for realist scholars of international politics.

Invoking 'humanity' or 'universals' as standards for assessing conduct within international politics is typically regarded as a futile venture for the hardened political realist. If we are to make sense of the conduct of states, especially as relational discourses that are shaped through the imagined communities of the nation, then we need to examine the cultural, spatial and geopolitical order of knowledge within international politics. For realist thinkers, this can only be achieved if we examine the constitution of world politics in terms of a system of amity/enmity. External threats come and go, and sometimes like the moon they can the tide off internal threats too. When a French army approached Florence in 1498, some Florentines hoped to make a separate and better peace with the French at the expense of their fellows. The clink of French gold might have found willing hands in Florence no matter how well governed it was. This speaks to the opportunistic flaws that exist within perceptions of our human nature, revealing the limits of political community when friends become enemies.

Beyond the outer walls of Machiavelli's Italy there were the superpowers of France and Spain, along with the impressive, if ramshackle, Holy Roman Empire in Germania. Florence also faced regional rivals, with powers like Venice and Milan to be reckoned with. Finally there was the supranational Latin-speaking power of the Papacy. These powers might cooperate, compete, or conflict in changing combinations and shifting alliances, sometimes public and explicit, whilst at other times de facto or secret. Cesare Borgia tried to forge his own kingdom in the Romagna. Such geopolitical constellations suggest the importance of place and, more importantly, scale for making sense of the political realities of Machiavelli's world.

Vigilance and prudence were important qualities for navigating the geopolitical world(s) inhabited by Machiavelli. We have noted that politics was a reluctant business for most Florentines, it is important to note that not everyone wanted to be prince. In fact, in a given time and place perhaps there was no one plotting against the prince, though several would be ready to take over if a vacancy occurred. If few aspired to be prince, many might invariably conspire for a change. Being a prince-maker brings its own rewards.

Who can tell by looking what a person is thinking? Who can be sure by looking what a person will do? Even those we know well can surprise us. There is no obvious way to be sure and so precautions are in order. Some of the internal walls will be designed to protect the prince from rivals and their supporters, just as in some houses there are privacy locks on some internal doors. Today it is the rare prime minister or president of even the most stable nation who appears in public without a platoon of bodyguards just as a Renaissance prince did. As one fictional Cold War secret agent advised a protégé: 'Let a man show friendship for you and you've got to deny him, mistrust him, suspect him, and nine times out of ten you'll be wrong but it's the tenth time that'll save you from a dirty death…' (Hall, 1971, 16). Although, as we will suggest below, Machiavelli's advice is less brutal than this.

As to outside enemies, to build and protect the walls the prince may have to do some terrible things. Like a soldier in battle he may have to do things no one should ever do in domestic life within secure walls. This dual profile of morality, establishing a moral gulf between public and private worlds, has operated as a significant narrative of international relations theory since the early Twentieth Century. Michael Walzer explored this moral territory in 'Political Action' (1973, 175) where he noted that Machiavelli limited the prince to what is necessary to maintain stability. Walzer's survey of the legalist paradigm also restricts forceful conduct at the international level, as territorial integrity and political sovereignty are the cornerstones of customary law at the international level. When all is said and done, there remains the inviolability of the external walls. This has been a dominant theme of international relations research and whilst many scholars after the end of Cold War re-phrased sovereignty as a protective discourse (e.g., the Responsibility to Protect) we

should note that the focus is still on the protective apparatus of the state against external threats. Those who comment on Machiavelli often assume that the selfish interest of the prince alone is at stake, but on the contrary we contend that Machiavelli's purpose is much broader, namely a stable and orderly society which a strong prince can make possible by building those redoubts. For Machiavelli, the prince is a soldier in battle at times but not at all times. The prince must learn to judge those times and govern himself accordingly. If the prince acts as though it was war all the time, then he will exhaust himself, his wealth, his supporters, and antagonize the populace.

In addition to balancing moral questions with the exigencies of political life, the prince must also make determinations about when a normal regime of law can or should be suspended. There is no certain formula for determining when the rule of law or settled regimes of politics should be suspended but there are many examples such as these: In 1970 the Liberal Canadian Prime Minister invoked the War Measures Act to put armed troops on the streets of Montréal; in 1984 the Socialist president of France declared a state of siege existed in New Caledonia to suspend civil liberties and impose martial law and in 2011 the Conservative New Zealand government declared a national state of emergency after the Christchurch earthquake. By suspending the rule of law in such cases (as Cicero is alleged to have done through the *senatus consultum ultimum*) it is evident that states possess the capacity to act beyond and outside the restraints of their own legal procedures. The point of these examples is that such extraordinary powers do exist and that these are sometimes used to save the walls within which we live.

To be explicit, to build the outside walls a prince may have to overcome opposition, resistance, and dissent from within the community itself. When times are calm, then no one wants to pay for great walls, no one wants to have their labor conscripted to build them. The taxes will have to be levied, nonetheless, and the labor obtained. Others will not want the walls to be just there but further over to accommodate their land or house. Others will want the contracts to build the walls and reap the profits. This is one way in which outside/inside politics meet. Increasingly, we are witnessing a blurring of the distinction between outside/inside walls.

To deal with opponents, internal or external, real or imagined, the prince may have to make common cause with enemies, including some pretty disagreeable characters and downright villains. As expressed by that old adage: my enemy's enemy is my friend. These alliances may be temporary; they may be specific; they are unlikely to endure. Necessity is difficult to judge and there will be arguments about those judgments too. Yet necessity has a way of silencing any critics, ushering unto the stage of world politics an acceptance that political discourse at the international level is nasty, brutish and inherently perilous.

Frenemies?
Noting that Machiavelli became an important figurehead in Italian fascism, Schmitt (1996 [1938], 84) also documented how scholars created a political myth called Machiavellism and, in so doing, overlooked his humanism. At about the same time Antonio Gramsci advised the Italian communism to make itself into 'The Modern Prince' (1957 [1926]). Schmitt continued, '[s]ome sober sentences and disconnected phrases of the poor Florentine humanist served to give the world the moralistic horror picture: "Machiavellism".' So readily is Machiavelli's name dropped that William Stark, the translator of Friedrich Meinecke's (1957 [1924], ix) study of *raison d'etat*, added the word 'Machiavellianism' to the title (Bew, 2015).

Machiavelli did say that a prince would have to learn how not to be good. That is, he would have to learn to do the despicable things necessary. 'Learn' is the word. It does not come naturally nor easily, and some princes are incapable of learning to do these things and they come to ruin, and along with them their peoples (*Prince*, 1513, Chapter. XVIII). 'Ruin' is the right word here. Machiavelli was not talking about an election where one team

replaces another and new innovations result in the logos on subway trains being changed and the livery repainted. We rather think Machiavelli would find the stakes in most contemporary elections amusing. For all the fulminating by rival candidates and the exaggeration piled on by the media, there is little at stake in the way of blood and bone.

Machiavelli's prince, might best be a decent person who must learn how and when not be good, that would be there best ruler. But 'very rarely will be there be found a good man ready to use bad methods' (*The Discourses*, Book I, Chapter 18). Even so the walls have to be built by someone. And over time, even a short time, a good man may become corrupted and leave the taps of cruelty and savagery on for too long. Despite the many who say Machiavelli recommended cruelty for its own sake and counseled the selfish lust for power, he did not do either but he knew they happened, worse, he knew that sometimes they were necessary. The prince may not be moderate in his personality but that matters less if the prince is a good judge of when and how it is necessary to be evil to defend the city walls, then good may come of it. Defense of the outside walls may have a cost on the inside walls, but as long as the proportion is right, that has to be endured. That proportion is another matter of judgment. Surely Machiavelli would have agreed with Horace Walpole who said 'that no great country was ever saved by good men' because good men will not go the lengths that may be necessary' (Walpole 1840 [1790], 426).

One can see in Machiavelli a single text from *The Prince* to *The Discourses* working from the outside walls to the inside walls, wherein once the outside walls are built and prove durable, the prince is finished and republican government must follow to make the most of the stability afforded to inside walls (Winarski 1963 and Mansfield 1996). Of course, the move from foundation of the walls to perpetuation of a republican regime such as Machiavelli extolls on page after page of *The Discourses* is not an easy matter. Possibly Machiavelli realized that and so did not discuss it in those pages, though he did discuss it later in a report commissioned by the Medici in 1520, the 'Discourse on the affairs after the death of Lorenzo d'Medici the Younger' in which he urged the Medici family to retain the republican institutions of Florence in the interest of stability. By blending the rule of the leading family with these institutions – internal walls – some moderation and continuity might result. This consultant's report was not well received.

Conclusion: Machiavelli beyond Realism and Utopianism

Scholars have 'collected' Machiavelli as part of the desire to establish a genealogy for realist theory in international politics. The attraction of this approach to Machiavelli is its timelessness, its universality, it contextlessness. This genealogy is achieved by ignoring the temporal and spatial dimensions of Machiavelli's world. We should be careful about reducing Machiavelli to the ultimate theme park of Realpolitik, as this deletes the complex development of the modern state that came after Machiavelli had completed his works.

Charles Tilly (1985, 171) observed how politics has worked through discourses of political violence and the central role that war-making plays in defining the walls of the modern state. Four processes are inherent in the formation of the modern nation-state: war making, state making, protection and extraction. Referring to both Machiavelli and Hobbes, Tilly argued that 'political observers have recognized that, whatever else they do, governments organize and wherever possible, monopolize violence.' In many ways, Machiavelli can be regarded as an example of the transfer of ideas into the field of international politics. Whether we consider the intellectual legacy behind the Project for the New American Century or the predominantly male corridors of Chatham House, we encounter a merchandising system in which political ideas are manufactured and ultimately consumed in order to legitimate a particular type of international system. Ken Booth (1995, 104) wrote that 'academic international relations too often performs the function of the Prozac of the human sciences.' That is, it numbs one into acceptance rather than into seeking out alternatives to the structural contradictions which lye beneath international order. Whilst

early Twentieth Century realists did not purport to offer a solution to the problem of anarchy, the theoretical paradigm that they developed is replete with claims about the possibility of differentiating between the world as it is and the world as it should, taking the former as fixed. Realist thinkers have continually stressed how a methodological commitment to positivism delivers a deeper and more accurate insight into the ontology of international politics. This is expressed in Morgenthau's (1978 [1948] 13) totemic fifth principle of Realism that '[p]olitical realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe.' In examining Machiavelli's contribution to Realist thinking, we would demand greater attention to the paradoxes and complexities of his political thought in the context of his life and times in the context of early Renaissance Italy.

Machiavelli's complexity is hidden by his simple and direct prose. The mistake is to think he offered conclusions for all times and places. He had no interest in first principles. He did not laying down the foundation of Realism, rather he addressed immediate problems in the walls, not giving lessons in design, architecture, or masonry. He did not look into the future when he wrote; he did look left and right and all around. He was, after all, not a philosopher and did not want to be one. Professional philosophers in the academy know this for he is seldom to be found on the curriculum in a Department of Philosophy. Machiavelli did not read Plato and Aristotle; had they been on the shelf it is doubtful he would have turned to them.

Machiavelli preferred the historians who wrote about what happened, more Livy than Lucretius. That oft-quoted passage in Machiavelli's letter to Francesco Vettori of 10 December 1513 (142) when he returns home, after a day eking out a living trapping birds and gathering firewood in the hills, to bathe and change into a robe to think about politics makes the point. Those he gathers around his mind are captains and generals and princes. For he says 'he enters courts of ancient men… and to ask them for the reasons for their actions' (emphasis added) which must mean men of deeds not words. He enters 'courts' not libraries or studies. We must keep this in mind, especially for those who would seek to canonize Machiavelli for his Machiavellism rather than for his insights into the particulars of the world in which he struggled with. We should not fear Machiavelli as a theorist of international politics, provided we attempt to locate him within the walled contexts in which he lived and died.

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