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The Renaissance of Political Realism in Early Modern Europe: Giovanni Botero and the Discourse of "Reason of State"*

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to reconstruct a type of early modern political realism that is perhaps less widely researched in the English language scholarly context than the main stream Machiavellian type. The Italian ex-Jesuit, Giovanni Botero's book *Della Ragion di Stato* (1589) is a fascinating experiment to combine some of the basic insights into *arcana imperii* (secrets of the state/power) made famous by the Florentine, and a refashioned Catholic teaching, as it was presented by the Jesuits. The paper tries to show the author's motivations and his main line of argumentation. The paper starts out with a historiographical overview of the state of the art in the field of the history of political realism, focusing on two representatives of the so-called Cambridge School, Richard Tuck and István Hont. This is followed by a short reconstruction of some of the key terms of Botero's treatise, based on the assumption that the history of ideas has to concentrate on the discourse used in a given context by the particular political agent or theorist. Next, certain contexts of Botero's thought are examined, including 16th century Tacitism, Lipsius, and the Jesuit tradition with its links to the Salamanca school. Finally, one of Botero's key concepts, the virtue of prudence is analysed, showing the deep-seated connections between Botero's political realism and the ancient Greek, Roman, and Catholic traditions of practical philosophy. A postscript links the early modern discourse with the birth of the study of international relations.

Key words: Botero, Machiavelli, political realism, prudence, Tacitism, Lipsius, Salamanca, international relations.

Słowa klucze: Botero, Machiavelli, realizm polityczny, roztropność, tacytyzm, Lipsjusz, Salamanka, stosunki międzynarodowe.

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The "historical turn" in the discipline of international relations: Richard Tuck and István Hont

People think of the discipline of international relations as being a 20th century sort of science. After all, it searches for answers to typically 20th century, global political questions, with a well-defined, 20th century kind of scientific methodology and perspective. According to the accepted narrative of the history of this science, its founding fathers were E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau. They were the ones who first started to think systematically about the nature of international relations in the interwar and post-war period, respectively, offering sharp critiques of what they regarded as the liberal utopianism of the post WW I period's theorisation of international relations. As these questions were strongly rooted in the real political context of their own age, a historical approach did not seem to be necessary or fruitful.

It is ironic, therefore, that recently even the narrative I referred to above as the discipline's birth was seriously questioned. Some think that it can be traced back well into the second half of the 19th century. If that is true, it means that even the self-identity of the discipline is in a process of transformation, which is accompanied by what is called the "historical turn".[1] This turn calls attention to the dangers of a lack of historical sense, indicating that without it, present day global political challenges cannot be made intelligible. After all, 'the political' itself also has a strong historical component, which is why in the ancient world the science of history gave the most sensible analysis and interpretation of the political phenomenon – think about Thucydides or Tacitus.

The present paper intends neither to evaluate the significance of the historical turn, nor to provide a judgement on the challenges confronted by the profession as a result of the turn. Rather, it will principally focus on an interesting junction, which has been caught sight of only recently. This is the connection between the history of Western political thought and a historically sound study of contemporary international relations. The interesting fact is that these dimensions are already extant in the writings of some of the early modern authors and their historians. If you look at the classic works of the so-called Cambridge school, like Pocock's *Machiavellian Moment*, or Skinner's *Foundations of the History of Political Thought*, you will find serious efforts to reconstruct the early modern discourse(s) on politics in its international dimension. However, there are historians of political thought who actually researched early modern subjects with an interest in present day global politics. I will shortly refer here to two representatives of this group, Richard Tuck and István Hont, both of whom– partly reacting to each other's works, partly independently from each other – turned towards a historical reconstruction of international relations in the early modern and modern period.[2]

[1] D. McCourt, *What's at Stake in the Historical Turn? Theory, Practice and* Phronēsis *in International Relations*, "Millennium: Journal of International Studies" 2012, Vol. 41 (1), p. 23–42.

[2] One should not forget about John Dunn, another Cambridge theorist, who was interested in international relations from very early on. We are talking about Cambridge, UK, of course; Richard Tuck's career started from there, too.

Richard Tuck, who at present is a professor at the Department of Government at Harvard University, conducted researched on international (or rather European) political thought of the early modern period (16th–17th century) under the influence and partly as the representative of the Cambridge group of the history of political thought. Importantly, Tuck has a sound knowledge of the history of economic thought, and therefore he is interested not only in the development of the political, but also the economic thought of this period. This is relevant because economic aspects play a major role in the research of international relations as well. First, Tuck reconstructed the natural law discourse of the period in his *Natural Rights Theories*. He revealed in the foreword of his book, that, although he was interested in a contemporary political philosophical question – more exactly, the problem of the foundation of human rights – he made this historical detour because he was convinced that "these problems, like much in the area of moral and political philosophy, could be solved historically, by an investigation of how the relevant language had developed".[3]

In a second monograph in intellectual history entitled *Philosophy and Government* he investigated the connection between (political) philosophy and the political regimes of the age. In this work he expounded upon his interest in why and how the practice of real life political advising distanced itself from academic/university theories of moral philosophy. He tried to discover the signs which showed when and how political "rationality" became autonomous, and what kind of arguments intellectuals and political thinkers who drifted quite close to politics tried in order to systematise or even legitimise the widening of the schism between political practice and the Christian norms outlined in moral philosophy. As Tuck showed, these later generations of humanists cut themselves away from the programme of Ciceronian-Aristotelian moral politics, and presented a new mixture of a political ideology, putting together the reception of ancient Stoicism, Scepticism, and Tacitism. This new political ideology arguably greatly influenced the way of political thought in the next century, which was characterised in historiography as the age of sovereignty and "absolute" monarchies.[4]

While Tuck examined the political thought of the late humanists from the perspective of law, commerce, and philosophy, István Hont preferred to look at the problem in the context of the age of Enlightenment, concentrating on economic thinking, history, and political ideas themselves, based on natural law. Let me refer to two of his works here. First to a multi-authored volume, the by now legendary collection entitled *Wealth and Virtue*, which he co-edited with Michael Ignatieff. This work was built on the recent research on the Scottish Enlightenment (in particular, on Hume and Smith), particularly looking at the connections between economics and politics in the political thought of the 18th century. But the relevance of Hont's own contribution and the perspective it opens up could only be seen when his own collected volume of essays was published much later. His *Jealousy of Trade* is a complex and magnificent work, tracing scrupulously a long and tricky story about the role commercial jealousy played in the birth of global

[3] R. Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories: Their Origin and Development*, Cambridge 1979, p. 1.

[4] Tuck himself argues that to be an advocate of the new ideas did not necessarily mean a radical departure from the earlier discourse. A number of thinkers (Lodovico Zuccolo, Federico Bonaventura, and Lodovico Sattala) could in fact incorporate new elements into their existing Aristotelian perspective. See: *idem*, *Philosophy and Government*, Cambridge1993, p. 127–128.

politics and the ideology of nationalism. His detailed analysis tries to build up a master narrative of the way the sharp early-modern competition of European empires and republics led to the discovery by the Scots (quarrelling with the French) of the ideology of unashamed national rivalry (based on economic interest), and how they formulated the theoretical framework of global economic rivalry and political strife, which is still a valid description of global affairs today, labelled as capitalism.

The work of Tuck and Hont (together with a number of their colleagues both in and outside of Cambridge) led a new generation of scholars to reflect on the question how to capitalise on the refined methodology and the excellent research findings of the history of political thought in the theoretical debates of international relations.[5] The present paper, too, aims at joining the discussion initiated by these two Cambridge researchers and their circle, when, considering the origins of political realism, it reconstructs the Italian sources of *ragione di stato*. It will focus on the thought of Giovanni Botero, a 16th century Italian Jesuit, with the intention of recovering the present day political philosophical relevance of his system of thought. Its methodology is going to be quite close to that of the history of political thought, circumscribing some of the basic concepts of Botero, with their background of late Renaissance Italian city states, identifying the intellectual contexts in which this *oeuvre* fits (mentioning eminently Tacitus, Lipsius, and the Jesuit tradition). Based on this historical reconstruction it will ask the philosophical significance of Botero's concept of reason of state (in particular, comparing it with the Ciceronian-Aristotelian teaching, and in general, with the republican tradition).[6] Finally, it will have a short look at the historical consequences of the universal applicability of reason of state, claiming that the afterlife of the term connects Botero like a hidden stream not only with Cardinal Richelieu, but also with Prince Metternich, and finally with the theoretical founding fathers of the discipline of international relations (IR) in 20th century US, including Henry Kissinger.

Giovanni Botero and the contexts of the doctrine of *ragione di stato*

The hero of our story is Giovanni Botero (1544–1619), a late humanist and one-time Jesuit, who published a number of important theoretical works in the last two decades of the 16th century. He does not belong today to the top of the canon of political thought, but his work had a deep effect on the notions of states and their rulers both in his own age and

5 In a personal letter [e-mail received on 12.20.2015] John Dunn, a close colleague and friend of Hont listed the following formal students of Hont: Bela Kapossy, Richard Whatmore, Sophus Reinert, Isaak Nakhimovsky, Ian McDaniel, and Paul Sagar. But he also mentioned a number of scholars who were not necessarily students of his, but who acknowledged his influence on their way of thought: Richard Bourke, Duncan Kelly, Duncan Bell, Michael Sonenscher, Richard Tuck ("who really only acknowledges Moses Finley and Istvan as formative intellectual influences"), and Raymond Geuss. I am also grateful to Béla Kapossy and John Robertson for further information of the list of Hont's students.

6 This paper does not differentiate between the different translation of the term: *ragion di stato*, *raison d'état*, *ratio status*, *Staatsräson*, but takes them as synonyms for the purposes of the present paper.

in the century which followed his death. He is interesting for us in this context because he was a key player in the renewed political realist discourse based on the concept of reason of state. The specific quality of his position is secured by his anti-Machiavellian, Catholic perspective.

1. Some relevant moments of Botero's life

For some time, Botero belonged to the most combative representatives of reborn Catholic theory and teaching. This is not accidental, as he was educated by the Jesuits in Palermo and Rome.[7] According to his professors in Rome he was already an ornery type of personality, which made him a troublemaker, and that is why he was sent to peripheral colleges as a tutor. Later, after another period of intense learning, he himself expressed a wish to be sent to Germany, in order to let him show his rhetorical and debating abilities against the great rival, the protestant pastors. Instead he was sent to France, where, at the time of the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre (August 24/25, 1572) of French Huguenots (Protestants) in Paris, souls were not ruled by peaceful sentiments. The passionate young man, who was agitating against the Spanish king, Philip II, had to be called back from Paris before he should find himself serving French royal interests instead of those of Catholicism. After his return, he was ordered to move to Milan, where he taught in the local college. After that episode Padua and Genoa were the next stations. For some time he was even considering travelling to America to look for new challenges, until one day when he gave an oration which sharply criticized the worldly power of the pope, and was called upon to leave the order.

Milanese Archbishop, Carlo Borromeo took the enthusiastic ex-Jesuit under his protection which made it easier for him to stand on his own feet. Botero soon became the Archbishop's secretary, and after his master's death he served the Archbishop's nephew with the same fervour. It was during this period that he published the direct antecedent of his *Della ragion di Stato*, the book entitled *De regia sapientia* (1583), dedicated to Carlo Emanuele, Duke of Savoy. In this *tractatus*, written in the scholastic style, the author already represented an Anti-Machiavellian position, which would characterise all the work he published later. Though at first glance his work appeared to be similar to the writings of the School of Salamanca, in his argumentation he preferred to build less on logic, and more on rhetoric, as was to be expected from a person familiar with the new fashion of humanistic thinking. He started to write his most important works after another trip to France, where he may possibly have met with the increasingly popular treatise of Jean Bodin (*Les six livres de la République*, 1576), written in the aftermath of the massacre. That is how *Delle cause della grandezza e magnificenza delle città* was first born in 1588. Then in 1589 he wrote *Della ragion di Stato*, and between 1591 and 1595 *Relazioni Universali* was published. These three pieces (of widely different topics and scopes) appeared in close proximity, offering a good overview for readers of Botero's wide range of interests, and the complexity of his way of thinking. In the first of them

[7] One of his uncles taught in the Jesuit college in Palermo.

he summed up what he knew about early-modern – mostly, but by no means exclusively Italian – cities, obviously relying on his own first-hand experience of life in Rome and Paris. The second one is a collection of political considerations about how to preserve empires, and the third is a comparative analysis (like those of Aristotle and Bodin) of the known world as it was opened up by geographic discoveries, missions of overseas colonisation, and the establishments of long distance trade. Of the three of them, the last one had the widest impact in its own time, but his work on reason of state was also translated into German, French, Spanish, and Latin.[8] This would permit the kings and subjects of the two countries which contended for control of Italy to read the book in their mother tongue, while the Latin translation made it available to cultivated readers in other parts of Europe as well. It is known that his work on reason of state caught the attention of Gaspare de Guzman, Count-Duke of Olivares, who was advisor to the king of Spain, and that the book was on the reading list of both Maximilian I, *Herzog* in Bayern and *Kurfürst* of the Holy Roman Empire, and of Ferdinand II, Holy Roman Emperor and king of Bohemia and Hungary.

Having achieved such marvellous intellectual performances, Botero finished his service at the side of Frederick Borromeo, and joined the entourage of Carlo Emanuele, the great Duke of Savoy, as tutor to his three children. As such, he travelled around Spain between 1603 and 1607, and still published; first a collection of biographies of famous ancient statesmen, entitled *I Prencipi* (1600), and then another collection of more modern examples of statesmanship. But these works could not surpass the influence of his greatest books.

2. Key concepts of Botero's book *On Reason of State*

By the time he published his volume *On Reason of State*, this concept had already been in use for some time. Apparently, the first use of the term was found in a speech by Archbishop Giovanni della Casa, addressed to emperor Charles V. The best known of the forerunners is Guicciardini, who, on the other hand, was himself linked to the greatest *disquisitore* of Botero, another Florentine, the infamous Machiavelli. To sum up his intentions in a shorthand form, Botero wanted to reformulate the realist way of thought and talk, which was (re)invented by Machiavelli, and which, by Botero's time, was accused of infidelity. His unbalanced relationship to his Florentine predecessor can be characterised by the following two statements: 1) he accepts the radical innovation of Machiavelli, who was not interested in the moralism of the traditional Aristotelian–Ciceronian humanist framework, but focused rather on political reality; 2) but denies the Machiavellian claim that political power – in the name of the common good – could claim the authority to do whatever it regarded to be necessary; in other words, Botero

[8] P. Burke, *Tacitism, Scepticism, and Reason of State* [in:] *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450–1700*, J.H. Burns (ed.), Cambridge 1991, p. 479.

tries to lead back the discourse within the framework of the Christian humanist discourse.[9]

From the very start it is clear that Botero is brave enough to put *ragion di stato* into the centre of the talk on politics. He defines reason of state in the following way: "State is a stable rule over a people (*Stato é un dominio fermo sopra popoli*) and Reason of State is the knowledge of the means by which such a dominion may be founded, preserved and extended (*fondare*, *conservare e ampliare*). [...] for *Reason of State* assumes a ruler (*il Prencipe*) and a state (*lo Stato*) (the one as artificer, the other as his material)".[10] From the beginning the author adds to this definition, that all activity pursued with such aims belong to what he calls reason of state, but most eminently those activities which cannot be examined in the light of ordinary reason (*ragione ordinaria*), creating an opposition of two kinds of reasonability.[11]

Although the questions he addresses partly cover Machiavelli's programme, the foundations upon which Botero builds indeed have characteristically anti-Machiavellian features. For example, when he criticises cruelty as a fundamentally false strategy in politics: "Cruelty (*crudeltà*) towards subject, and licentiousness, which dishonours all men and in particular the noble and generous, also bring ruin upon the State" [4–5].[12] He also criticises ambitious (and foolish) princes, who too "bring ruin upon their States by dispersing their strength in an attempt to undertake what is beyond their means" [5]. This moderation in the use of cruelty returns later, too – although Botero admits that successful conquest might require power (*forza*), yet preserving power is more burdensome, and might require wisdom (*sapienza*) as well.

Interestingly here he already refers to Tacitus, and by doing so opens up one of the most important possible directions for us to interpret what he has to say.[13] It is perhaps not by chance that (contrary to Machiavelli, who chose to give advice to his prince when the latter had to confront the problems of newly acquired power) Botero's prince seems to be less interested in how to get more power, than in how to preserve what has already been earlier acquired, i.e. in the common interest of all (the state). In an anachronistic way the difference is between the interest of the ruler (Machiavelli), and the interest of the political community (Botero). It is therefore not surprising that after Tacitus he

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[9] In this regard the opposite pole to Machiavelli's position is taken by Erasmus, who in his *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1516) written three years after *The Prince*, but published earlier than Machiavelli's piece, kept the original Christian humanist framework.

[10] G. Botero, *The Reason of State*: *The Greatness of Cities*, New Haven 1956, p. 3, http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015002702705;view=1up;seq=23. Italian version: *Della Ragione di Stato*, in Venetia, appresso I Gioliti, MDXCVIII, https://ia600300.us.archive.org/13/items/dellaragionedist00bote/dellaragionedist00bote_bw.pdf (27.04.2016).

[11] *Ibidem*, p. 3. This comment appears in the 1598 edition, it is missing from the original one. The term 'ordinary reason' is important because it is connected to the Thomist philosophical tradition (*recta ratio*), as well as to the term 'common sense/*bon sens*' of modern philosophy. It is also remarkable because Botero here shows that he is always ready to moderate the radicalism of his own view, making it clear, that only the exceptional, particular, urgent cases might require the special logic of political realism.

[12] English quotes are taken from the online English edition, see above. Italian terms are given from the online Italian edition, mentioned above. From now on, the numbers in brackets refer to the pages of the English translation of Botero's work.

[13] For the Botero–Tacitus connection, see: K.C. Schellhase, *Botero, "Reason of State", and Tacitus* [in:] *Botero e La "Ragion di Stato*: *Atti dei Convegni in Memoria di Luigi Firpo"*, A.E. Baldini (ed.), Firenze 1992.

promptly quotes Aristotle, too, arguing that for the Greek philosopher the most important job of the legislator is to preserve the polis for a long time.[14] The interpretation of Botero's doctrine of reason of state which finds its function in a total denial of the Aristotelian–Ciceronian direction, leaves out this aspect of his thought, and seems to me to be misdirected.[15] Botero remains relevant today because he is quite determined to find the *via media* between Machiavelli's new and egoistic and the traditional, Aristotelian moral style of political discourse. He is aware of the freshness of the Florentine secretary's insights, and of his approach of disenchantment, and yet he does not fully accept it. For him political thought is not only a cold and impartial summary of the facts, but also the drawing of conclusions in a way which allows one's audience to see the normative dimensions as well. The novelty of Botero's way of thinking in his own day was a departure from the naïve and idealistic talk of politics characteristic of the antique and Christian political theory of the earlier periods. At the beginning of his book he already brings up important new issues, for example his preference for middle-sized states. As he sees it, large states are prone to become subjects of envy, while small ones can easily become prey to the large ones' cruelty. But medium-sized states have a moderate control over two of the most important goods of states, namely wealth (*ricchezze*) and power in the positive sense of the ability to act (*potenza*), and therefore any passions (*passioni*) or ambitions (*ambitione*) turning against them are also less brutal, and can garner less support. This is an argument in favour of the golden mean, which, since it tries to provide safeguards against the extremities of passions, is an obvious engagement with the Aristotelian tradition. Nor is not by chance either that his reference point – beyond Sparta and Carthage – is Venice, of which it was well known that the causes of its long term survival were these: that it was a midsized power, and that it could preserve stability (*più stabile*) together with power (*più fermo*) (Book 1, Chapter 6). An important condition for such long survival is that the ruler is reconciled with the fact that he governs a midsized state. The fact that he successfully preserved his power for a long time is proof of the Venetians' virtues, including (besides a mixed regime) moderation, which is transferred here from individual morality to the new context of the European states' struggle for empire.

Of course, just as Machiavelli, while giving advice to the prince, kept his republican identity, Botero, who worked out the theory of reason of the early-modern state was still loyal to republican political virtues. This is clear if we consider that although he is a supporter of the economic competition of cities and states, and – unlike Machiavelli – also recognised the significance of commerce and the peace that makes commerce possible, he used very harsh words against those generations of ancient Rome who became weak and morally corrupted as a result of luxurious consumption, and who forgot about the defence of their *patria* because of their wish to maximise their individual sensory pleasure. He is a defender of Roman virtue (*virtù romana*) [12] in the most traditional sense of the term, and unlike the sense used by Machiavelli. It is also in accordance with the traditional Greco-Roman moral doctrine, that he regards external threat as a less imminent danger than the atrophy of the inner moral sense. He seems to share the common

[14] Botero refers to Aristotle's *Politics*, Book 2, 1274.

[15] One of these interpreters is Peter Burke, in his above-mentioned, influential book.

wisdom according to which the power of the soul makes the conclusive difference, not the material conditions.

But he chooses from the Greco-Roman heritage in a selective way – the wartime virtues are not really relevant for him. In his view the first prerequisite of the preservation of the state is to secure the peace and calm (*quiete e pace*) [15] of the citizens. And by the term 'war' he means not only external and violent conflicts but also rebellion and civil war, too. Against these risks a remedy can be provided by those arts (*arti*) [15] by which the prince can win the love and admiration of the people. However, when Botero thinks about the dilemma as to whether reputation or love (*riputatione o l'amor*) [15] is more valuable for the ruler, his starting point is the common good, which is a typically Roman-Christian notion. He also thinks that the people look for leaders, who excel in courage and virtue (*eccellenza di valore e di virtù*) [16], and therefore can serve the common cause. In the long term, it is only personal excellence that can guarantee loyalty, without which the preservation of the state is impossible. With the help of such excellence, the ruler can distinguish himself among his compatriots, a conclusion that makes Botero's theory relevant for the justification of absolute rule, as well, for he ascribes an almost celestial and divine greatness (*una certa grandezza quasi celeste e divina*) [18] to the best of rulers. True enough, he makes efforts to trace this assumption back to ancient authors, including (beside Tacitus) once again Aristotle, who regarded those holding practical wisdom and good judgement as being beholders of natural rationality and this way true members of a natural elite.

The reputation of a ruler who belongs to this natural elite has two conditions, which are also the two most important pillars of any government: valour (*valore*) and practical wisdom (*prudenza*) [47]. Botero analysed this last one with extra care, because he thought that the rationality of the state requires exactly this virtue. We shall return to this concept later on, as this one will shed light on the connection between the doctrine of reason of state and political realism.

If we try to delineate some of the key concepts of Botero's vision of politics (including reason of state, preservation of the state, wisdom versus power, wealth and potentiality, stability, peace, reputation, natural ruling virtues, valour, and prudence), then perhaps one can indeed make sense of the claim, that this is a theory which is halfway between the traditional moralising ancient-Christian-humanist position and the modernist-Machiavellian position, which emphasises the autonomy of the political.

In what follows we are going to examine how Botero's way of thinking compares with some of the leading minds and trends of his period. First, we compare it to the early-modern discourse of Tacitism, then to the Christian Stoic scepticism of Lipsius, and finally to the pattern of political thought advocated by the Jesuits and Dominicans of the day. I will not deal specifically with the Machiavelli–Botero connection, but rather will touch upon that theme within the context of Tacitism. Nor shall I deal with the Bodin–Botero connection, as this topic still requires further investigation on my part.[16]

[16] Bodin is adequately captured by the study of Bodroff, mentioned above. Unfortunately, I will not be able to describe the Guicciardini-Botero link either in the scope of this paper, because this topic requires special treatment as well.

The rise of Tacitism in the 16th century

If we approach the influences which might be relevant for Botero's thought from the perspective of the discourse of reason of state, the first one which comes to mind is Tacitism. István Borzsák quotes "the monographer of *staatsräson*", Meinecke, who famously claimed that the idea of *ragione di stato* was not invented out of the blue, but can be traced back to the works of Tacitus.[17] The term Tacitism dos not relate to the historical figure of a Roman author with that name, but refers to an early-modern, late humanist intellectual "fashion", which had a dominant influence. The name of the author himself is used here only as a label, as an argument of authority. According to Borzsák, "the centuries long reception of Tacitus […] is not the same as the modern concept of Tacitism".[18] He even provides a definition of Tacitism as it was meant in the early-modern period: in his view this term referred to that political literature which appeared in the period after the Renaissance, "in which the forbidden name of Machiavelli was replaced by that of Tacitus, who was not at all problemless, but who was regarded acceptable according to contemporary court standards".[19]

It is well-known that, besides Machiavelli, Botero mentions Tacitus in the recommendation of his book. Although he seemingly strongly criticises both, in fact he does not condemn Tacitus, the person, but the hero of his historical narrative, emperor Tiber, who in his view has misused the reference to reason of state.[20]

If we try to assess his references in a systematic manner, we find that Tacitus is one of the sources which returns most often. This is all the more interesting if we recall that in his *De regia sapientia*, which had been completed only a few years earlier, in 1582–1583, we do not find traces of the disillusioned historian of late ancient Rome. To explain this fresh interest in Botero's thinking researchers had very diverse suggestions. This paper is not in a position to decide who is right in that debate. Momigliano thought that Botero could have met Carolus Paschalius in his travels to Paris, and this latter was an ardent supporter of the rehabilitation of Tacitus.[21] Schellhase, however, thought that they could have met in a number of ways, including the following options: that Botero accidentally heard Muret's lectures at some time between 1580–1582; that he could have

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[17] I. Borzsák, *A tacitizmus kérdéséhez* [in:] *Dragma. Válogatott tanulmányok*, Budapest 1994, p. 279–291, 283.

[18] *Ibidem*, p. 281.

[19] *Ibidem*, p. 290.

[20] The exact relation between Botero and Tacitus remains an open question for most of the secondary literature. Peter Burke holds the view that the many references to Tacitus are not enough to claim that he turned against Tacitus. In Schellhase's opinion Botero's references are neutral. He thinks that Botero's approach to Tacitus is just as critical as his views of Machiavelli. About the different views, see: K.C. Schellhase, *Tacitus in Renaissance Political Thought*, Chicago 1976.

[21] A. Momigliano, *The First Political Commentary on Tacitus*, "The Journal of Roman Studies", Vol. 37, No. 1–2, p. 9 –101. Momigliano has pointed out that both Paschalius and Lipsius published a Tacitus commentary in 1581, and argued that Paschalius had a stronger impact on many of those who came to join the camp of Tacitism, than Lipsius did. See: *idem*, *Tacitus and the Tacitist Tradition: The Foundations of Modern Historiography*, Berkeley 1990, p. 109–131, 124.

come across Tacitus while he was reading Bodin in Paris; or that he read of the parallels between the early-modern rulers and Tiber in Guicciardini or Lipsius.[22]

The important thing for us here in this fine, micro-historical debate is the claim that Botero's ideas of reason of state are not rooted in Machiavelli's thought, which by then was strictly forbidden, but from the Tacitism of the 1580s. And the relevance of this genealogy is that it makes it obvious that, although Botero originally intended to criticise both of these traditions, he was much closer to the disillusioned picture of man as was outlined in early-modern Tacitism than to Machiavelli. Therefore we have good reason to regard him as one of the founders of that wing of early-modern political realism which remained within the confines of Christian humanism, while the other wing crossed this line with Niccolò Machiavelli.

Lipsius, Botero, and the critique of Machiavelli

Tacitism met with the early-modern, or late-renaissance idea of reason of state in the *oeuvre* of another political theorist who had an even wider reception than Botero. Justus Lipsius was born in the southern part of the Low Countries as Joost Lips. He became a very well-educated philologist-humanist, who published two volumes of interest to us: a moral philosophical piece on *De Constantia* and a political piece entitled *Politica*. The two ancient authors who had a lasting influence on him were Seneca and Tacitus. He published original text editions of Tacitus, but as he was not himself a historian, one can easily come to the conclusion that his interest in him was not motivated by Tacitus the historian, but more by the problem of political sobriety, which is one of this author's key issues.

If we try to reconstruct the link between Lipsius and Botero, the first thing to ask is whether they could have actually met. Some scholars argue that they could easily have met. Richard Tuck calls attention to the fact that according to his correspondence, Lipsius got Botero's book on reason of state in 1597.[23] But even more interestingly, Tuck suggests that Botero, too, could have heard about Lipsius' activities through his masters, the Borromeos, who were corresponding with Lipsius.[24] In Tuck's view Lipsius belonged to that wave which was criticising Machiavelli, but tried to take over his armour to use it against him, to appropriate whatever seemed suitable from the teachings of the Florentine, to be used within a Christian discourse on politics. Botero himself belonged to this wave, too. He took the technique of attacking Tacitus and Machiavelli, and in the meantime tried to get a grip on their armour, to use it to defend his own argumentation.

This was the technique used by Lipsius. He deliberately deceived his opponents, concealed his own views, and, what is even more unorthodox, he often changed them, behaving like a religious Nicodemite in the realm of politics.[25] This might be one of the

[22] K.C. Schellhase, *Tacitus*..., p. 125, 126, 219–220.

[23] R. Tuck, *Philosophy*..., p. 61.

[24] *Ibidem*, p. 66.

[25] Nicodemism was regarded as a strategy of dissimulation, in matters of religion in the early modern period, after Calvin's famous piece: *Excuse à Messieurs les nicodémites* (1544).

reasons why we cannot easily pinpoint his position even today. His major work, written in the style of Seneca, focuses on the undoubtedly Stoic virtue of constancy, and further Stoic virtues, including *ataraxia* or *apatheia,* often return in his writings. But as a political thinker he was much closer to the Antimachiavellian and Tacitist literature. It is not an exaggeration to say what Robert Bireley suggests, claiming that, together with Botero, Lipsius can easily be regarded as the founder of a specifically Catholic "Anti-Machiavellian" political way of thinking, whose "concern was to elaborate a vision of practical politics, in response to Machiavelli, that would be moral, Christian, and effective in the circumstances of the late sixteenth century".[26]

Of course, we have already pointed out above that in Lipsius' case, we cannot be fully convinced of either his religious beliefs, or his political convictions, as he concealed both and also changed them frequently. This concealment is closely related to exactly that idea of politics which we are addressing, which is part and parcel of court life not only in Renaissance Italy, but throughout Europe up into the Baroque period. The courtier's strategy is nicely theorised in the court literature of the era, centred as it is on the notion of *simulation/dissimulation* – the deceit of the prince is not so far away from that, of course.[27] As Leo Strauss kept stressing, the same cover strategies were followed by the authors of the theoretical literature of early modernity, which makes the debate about Botero's and Lipsius' exact philosophical positions even more difficult to terminate.

Christopher Brooke, for example, doubts the interpretation of Bireley, and claims that the Anti-Machiavellians' doctrines were much closer to Machiavelli, but concealed because of the alertness of the censorship authorities of the Vatican. Jan Hendrik Waszink detected that *Politica* was on the Index of the Vatican for only a short while, and when certain parts of it were cut out, it could immediately disappear form that infamous list.[28] The present paper is not entitled to take a position in this debate, the less so as we admit that the rhetorical strategy of *simulation/dissimulation* makes it fully unreasonable to attribute a well-defined and stable philosophical position to these authors. We only concentrate on the question of how to describe their relationship to the Machiavellian challenge. This paper accepts as honest their claim that they wanted to dispose of the exaggerations of the Florentine, while accepting much of the practical view of politics reintroduced by Machiavelli, but transferring it into the context of the Christian humanistic discourse. In this respect this paper is perhaps closest to the interpretation of Jan Papy who denied that his contemporary critics had either provided a full refutation of Machiavelli's ideas, or had been his secret fans. As he saw them they were working on a synthesis of a direct way of talking about politics while still preserving external standards to judge political agents, besides the practical standard of success. Papy found that in *De Constantia* there was already an effort to create a synthesis, where the two poles to bridge were Christianity and Stoicism. The same wish to negotiate was present in the *Politica*, too, which is "an attempt to produce a synthesis between the traditional mirror

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[26] R. Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince: Anti-Machiavellianism or Catholic Statecraft in Early Modern Europe*, Chapel Hill 1990, p. 73.

[27] See: B. Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, Garden City 1959; P. Burke, *The Fortunes of the Courtier*: *The European Reception of Castiglione's Cortegiano*, Cambridge 1995.

[28] Ch. Brooke, *Philosophic Pride: Stoicism and Political Thought from Lipsius to Rousseau*, Princeton 2012.

of princes, a popular genre among humanists, and Machiavelli's *The Prince*".[29] Lipsius' supposed, most probably not wholly successful attempt to find a synthesis is to be understood in the context of the tendency of the early-modern period to mix up different traditions and mediate between rather divergent discourses. The third context we refer to is also an example of this intellectual plurality of the age: the tradition of Jesuit political thinkers, which is also full of examples of making use of the rhetorical and conceptual armour of the opponents in the strategic games of scholarly debate.

The context of early-modern Catholic philosophy: Salamanca and the Jesuit tradition

As was mentioned earlier, Botero was deeply influenced by the Jesuit educational model. Being brought up in it, he himself taught in Jesuit colleges, and when he had to leave the order, he still remained in many ways within the confines of this way of thinking. One should also keep in mind that a lot of his readers could interpret Botero's own philosophy as a teaching which makes sense in the context of Jesuit education. In this respect it is important that in the 1580s–1590s a body of educational norms was put together, called the *Ratio Studiorum*, which summed up the decades of experience of teaching in Jesuit schools, and defined the canon taught in the Jesuit educational institutions. In the Jesuit educational model philosophy was based on Aristotle and Aquinas. The consequence of this fact for political thought was that the Jesuit way of thinking – like the humanists' one, too – connected the realist wing of ancient political thought with certain dominant authors of the Christian tradition. In this respect we cannot speak about radical innovation. It is better to see it as a new combination of existing traditions, a synthesis, which served specifically the Jesuit mission.

The Salamanca School, a spiritual circle around the professor Francisco de Vitoria (1483–1546) had a great impact on this emerging canon. Vitoria was a Dominican friar. He studied in Paris, and acquainted himself with the ruling paradigms of the philosophy of the early 16th century, among others, with that of Erasmus. When he started to teach in Salamanca, a school was soon crystallising around him, grappling with the problem of collecting the new tendencies of the age under the umbrella of a reconstructed Thomist theoretical framework. He had to react not only to the elastic rhetorical ideas of the humanists and the innovative theological views of the reformers, but also to the new political experiences that were being born as a result of the global discoveries across the seas. A host of new challenges emerged on the field of domestic policy, too, in Spain, as well as on the Continent, where the Spanish king was one of the defenders of Catholicism and a key player in the new rush for universal empire. Vitoria is regarded by many with some exaggerations as one of the founders of international law. A recent interpretation,

[29] J. Papy, *Justus Lipsius* [in:] *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/justus-lipsius/ (10.12.2015).

however, talks about him as the representative of early-modern global political philosophy, as well.[30]

Vitoria was influential within his own home university, on people like another Dominican, Domingo de Soto, and the Jesuit Francisco Suárez, themselves important authorities in their own right. But his spiritual influence has grown much beyond his alma mater, and the way of thought labelled as the Salamanca School became a standard for much of the whole early-modern Catholic world. The ideas of Vitoria, together with those of Suárez and Bellarmino, played a major role in the discourse, which functioned as the theoretical part of the struggle to divide the world among the European superpowers, and to conclude the European competition among the different Christian denominations, which was also joined, though from the other side, by Hugo Grotius from the Low Countries. Suárez and Vitoria represented a more philosophical, natural law position, while Bellarmino concerned himself more with the theological arguments, which he supplemented with historical analyses.[31]

If we read them in this context, Botero's arguments appear in a different light than along the Lipsius–Machiavelli axis, or when we read them from the perspective of his relationship with Tacitus. From this point of view, what matters is not the fact that Botero would like to reconcile the spiritual and moral authority attributed to the ruler and utility, the demands of reason of state, and a responsibility for the whole community. In this respect the influence of Salamanca-style Catholic teaching on him is obvious.[32] For indeed, the members of the Salamanca School were all interested in reconciling divergent theoretical models, like late Scholasticism with natural law and the new, international economic-global order, and were also influenced by the new discoveries and the occupation of foreign dominions by the European great powers.

Unfortunately, according to his sharpest critics, Botero saw his own reconciliation too optimistically unproblematically, which might in the final analysis be labelled as disregard for moral problems, as well as mistaken judgement of the logical difficulties. If we accept that his conciliatory moves were theoretically rather shallow, the charge of tacit Machiavellianism can once again be brought back against him.

There are two further points to make, which seem to be even more important, though less evidently rising from the same roots. One of them is the economic aspect, the other one, the appearance of a global approach in Botero's way of political thinking. Both of these two aspects were inspired by the Salamanca way of thinking and both had a decisive role as to why Botero's work looked seminal in the 17th century. Let us therefore

[30] J. Thumfart, *Die Begründung der globalpolitischen Philosophie: Zu Francisco de Vitorias "relectio de indis recenter inventis" von 1539*, Berlin 2009. For an overall discussion of the theoretical backbones of the newly emerging global order of the period, see: A. Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c. 1500–1800*, London–New Haven 1995; *Lineages of Empire: The Historical Roots of British Imperial Thought*, D. Kelly (ed.), Oxford 2009.

[31] R. Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450–1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation*, Washington 1999, p. 80–81.

[32] Botero is sometimes regarded as belonging to that group of Jesuits (called the Coimbra School), who took over the leading role in intellectual life from the Dominicans at the end of the 16th century. See for example Andrea Finkelstein, who claims that followers of the Salamanca school in Italy included Botero: A. Finkelstein, *Harmony and the Balance. An Intellectual History of Seventeenth-Century English Economic Thought*, Ann Arbor 2000, p. 4.

touch upon them briefly. Both themes have a much wider connotation than our present concern here, and they represent a call to approach Botero's work holistically, which is impossible in the present paper. Let us deal briefly with the two aforementioned aspects.

For the economic perspective one needs to consult his shorter piece, created just a bit earlier than *Ragione di Stato*. It is entitled *Delle Cause della grandezza e magnificenza delle città* (1588). The author's aims are not as elevated here as in the two other masterpieces. Here he is simply interested in the factors that select a given town, and elevate it above the others in greatness and richness.[33] He observes that to become great a town requires an adequate quality of soil, and richness of the territory which serves it. But he also drew attention to the importance of the special handicrafts and trades that are characteristic of a given town. He moves one step further when he claims that even intellectual abilities can contribute to the rise of a town. His example is Rome, where, he claimed, the cultivation of religious rituals, the relics of the saints, and even the sanctified spaces of the churches and other halls of religious practice contributed to raising the glory of the town. In other cases, establishing a university turned out a decisive push for a city's growth. Botero refers here to Paris, where the Sorbonne magnetized students and professors alike early on, emphasizing that an institution like this could have beneficial influence on a number of other professions as well. Finally, political life can also be crucial: to become a governmental centre could determine the fate of a town, while such a strong impetus at one place could turn out to be fatal for its competitors, who would not necessarily be able to counterbalance their advantage in other ways. Considering all these aspects together, one can say that even Botero provided a complex overview of the economic and technological underpinnings of early-modern urban development, from a kind of comparative historical (sociological) perspective on the European city.

The other important topic which emerges in Botero's thought, and which is not wholly independent from the Salamanca-style theoretical background, is the effort to reach a global – comparative – perspective. His third and thickest project is entitled *Relazioni Universali* (1591–1595). It covers a rather wide area: "Its four parts offer a descriptive cosmography: of the continents and islands of the globe; of the principal states and their rulers; of the world's peoples and their faiths, and of the challenges presented by New World peoples and their religious practices".[34] In the newly discovered global arena Europe defined its own task as that of keeping order and peace. This programme was announced by Botero in accordance with the literary heritage of the *Aeneis*, but his framework for Europe is, of course, already Roman Christianity. He thought that the Spanish struggle for world dominance was easily understandable from his Northern Italian, Catholic – and for that matter Jesuit – perspective, too. In accordance with the Ciceronian, Humanist discourse, he added that the least developed peoples of the world, in order to be ready for "pacification", also needed to reach an acceptable standard of "civility". This target requires their being settled down, and their acquisition of literacy. Only a culture which satisfies these prerequisites can give due honour to God, or in the non-Judeo-Christian tradition, to the gods. Botero's own programme of creating a global

[33] N.J.G. Pounds, *A Historical Geography of Europe, 1500–1840*, Cambridge 1978, p. 28–29.

[34] D. Cosgrove, *Globalism and Tolerance in Early Modern Geography*, "Annals of the Association of American Geographers" 2003, Vol. 93, No. 4, p. 865.

civilisation of high culture turns out to be, in the final analysis, a kind of this-worldly theodicy.

Naturally, as was pointed out earlier, the present paper cannot pay due attention to these last two works of Botero's, with their typical Jesuit themes. This is the more regrettable because they, too, played a role in laying the foundations of Botero's prestige as an early representative of political realism. Botero's achievement on these fields is the more remarkable if we recall that even Machiavelli was hardly interested in the economic conditions of a flourishing state. From this perspective, Botero must have been – directly or indirectly – inspired by the Salamanca School and Jesuit tradition. And, whence he had an economic interest, and he explained the success of cities partly from their economic geographic and geo-political location, it is almost natural that his theory of state opened up towards an early, historical-comparative study of international relations.

Without getting deeper into their content, the following conclusion can be drawn. If we consider how Botero takes into account the (micro- and macro-) geographical and economic aspects, we have to admit Romain Descendre's idea which suggests that we should not analyse Botero's *oeuvre* in a segmented manner, but together, in their totality, at least as far as the three major works are concerned.[35] Descendre argues that by reading the three books together we will see how far Botero's work can indeed be regarded as a new, early-modern Renaissance of political realism.

A theoretical approach to Botero's teaching – the meaning of *prudentia*

If we accept that the Jesuit-Catholic connection is crucial to an understanding of Botero's efforts, then some further questions may be raised, as well. One of these questions, and an outstanding one, is this: if we want to evaluate Botero's political thought, what relevance should we attribute to his sceptical, pseudo-Machiavellian, Tacitist line? In other words: what can we answer to the problem posed by Peter Burke, who thought that Botero's book on reason of state is a document of his farewell to the Aristotelian view.[36] The present paper argues that this is not exactly the right direction if we want to make sense of Botero's endeavour. To reposition it, however, it seems to be necessary to connect the answer to this question with the reply to another question by Maurizio Viroli, a late 20th century republican theorist. In his opinion Botero's project is an important step in that process, which led from a politics with a civic, republican overtone towards one aiming to build up a monarchic, absolutist, centralised state. In other words, away from the Florentine model of political participation, and towards the French model of the

[35] "J'ai pour ma part voulu savoir s'il était possible d'interpréter les trois livres de Botero comme autant de pièces d'un unique dispositif théorico-politique, non systématique, certes, mais cohérent". R. Descendre, *L'état du monde: Giovanni Botero entre Raison d'État et géopolitique*, Genève 2009, p. 13.

[36] Peter Burke's message is already contained in the title of the chapter in the *Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700*, entitled *The End of Aristotelianism*, under which Peter Burke's own article on Tacitism is to be found.

unlimited power of centralised state machinery. This paper contests this interpretation, claiming that the reconstructed picture should not be so simple and black-and-white. Botero's reason of state is neither an exodus of morality from the campaign fields of politics, nor a withdrawal of politics from the debating halls of morality. What really happens is that Botero recognizes that in politics it is indeed crucial that the decision maker confront the really burning issues of the day. This can only be achieved if the ruler is not obliged by the pressing circumstances of the moment to deceive members of his or her country's citizenry. Now this is an explicitly Aristotelian problem: how can a political leader answer the challenges of a given situation without sacrificing his identity (his belief, conviction, heritage), and without denying his principles? Botero's shorthand answer to this haunting question is the concept of *prudenza* in his book on reason of state. This answer is directly based on the way Aristotle talks about *phronesis* in Book 6 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It resurfaces in Cicero's volumes on politics, and in the way it was overtaken by Aquinas, in his commentaries on Aristotle and in the relevant (moral-theological) parts of his *Summa*.

If we take the concept of *prudentia* seriously enough*,* it can even answer the question raised by Viroli, too. After all, practical wisdom is clearly not a category which concerns only the tyrant. It is the character trait of the virtuous and the just (or at least politically, pragmatically acceptable) ruler. Aristotle draws a memorable example: that of Pericles. The picture makes it clear that the Aristotelian category of practical wisdom is not simply about the monarch or tyrant. Monarchs, aristocracies, and even plebeians can be prudent. After all, as we have seen, prudence played a crucial role in early-modern ideas about the ideal courtier, as well. For Gracián, who wanted to elaborate the theory of Castiglione, even the hero becomes virtuous by obtaining practical wisdom. Gracián, too, started his career – like Botero himself – as a Jesuit monk, and he, too, criticised Machiavelli. The virtue of prudence is surely not a privilege limited only to the holder of power, but is generally a pre-condition for participating in politics. In this sense the category connects the ancients, the Aristotelian tradition of the humanists, and the discourse of reason of state initiated by Botero.

Let us see, now, more concretely, how the author characterises practical wisdom in the second book of *Ragione di stato*. As we have seen, this virtue often goes together with valour. But practical wisdom is, in fact, a real spiritual potential. Botero's ideal ruler is familiar with the councils of moral philosophers and political theorists. He knows a lot about human nature, too. The former leads him to the insight that the human being is a victim of his own passions, the latter to the assumption that a good government should control human passions (Book 2, Chapter 2). Control for him means the art of keeping internal order within the individual, but also mastery of the science of war and peace for the wellbeing of the community. Both of them require, as usual, the help of rhetoric. In order to exercise social control, both the renaissance and the baroque ruler required a court. According to humanist ideals, Botero expected the ruler to be able to control the republic of letters, too; to wield the pen as well as the sword. His ruler is a strategic player in the battle of the books, a master of that science, which may help him directly in his political practice: in history (Book 2, Chapter 3).

Botero makes use of the theatrical metaphor of history. According to him watching the dramas of the theatre of the past, the ruler can gain experience without risking or los-

ing anything. He can learn much about the habits and customs of his people, as well as about the political institutions of other nations, which would hardly be possible in any other way in those days. He follows the footsteps of Aristotle (instead of Plato), when he defends poetry. As he sees it, poetry can help the ruler by offering him inspiring heroic examples from the past to follow. But Botero connects historical lessons and poetic exemplars with an acquaintance with human nature, as well. For him human nature is defined by education, age, and individual life circumstances. In these matters Aristotle has already given ample instruction.

One of Botero's returning themes is the determining influence of the environment (Book 2, Chapter 5). Much earlier than Montesquieu, there is a geographic determinism in Botero's way of thinking, presenting the northern peoples as followers of the republican model or of elected monarchy (including Transylvania as well, but excluding both England and Scotland), while the southern ones are characterised by religious enthusiasm and superstition. The same way he creates oppositions between mountain- and valley-dwellers, between islanders and peoples from the mainland. The environment was discussed in a detailed manner in his third influential book, *Relazione Universali.* In his book on reason of state the issue of geopolitical determinism is only touched upon in a few short passing remarks.

In the same way we can read short advisory gnomes here taken over from the traditional mirror for princes' literature. These are samples to show that the author is also aware of that genre, and that he is able to take the traditional role of the adviser, as well. In the summary of his life we have already pointed out that for some time he actually held the role of political adviser. His pieces of advice in this book concern, for example, the art of waging war, and focus on timing, too. As we have mentioned, Botero follows the tradition of ancient Greco-Roman practical philosophy, which can be traced back at least to the Greek concept of *phronesis*. This ancient concept was traditionally connected to the concept of *kairos* (the well-chosen, appropriate moment).[37] The connection between the two concepts is this: practical wisdom can be grasped as undelayed action (action with appropriate timing). "Learn to recognise the critical moment (*conoscer l'occasioni dell'imprese*) in war and affairs and to seize opportunities as they appear (*abbraccia opportunamente*)" [46]. In order to accomplish this, Botero requires the same thing that Aristotle required: designing the action should not take too long, but leave the options of improvisation and intuition open, the impulse of the moment and last minute changes prevail: after all, adequate action will always be best accommodated to the occasion. To find the right timing (*tempo*) is almost as important for the action of the ruler, as it is for the musician.

Describing the practical wisdom of the ruler, Botero provides a full chapter on the question of secrecy. As he sees it, the ability to keep secrets is an all-important virtue. In this case, his reference is Tacitus, which is not at all surprising. We have already hinted at the popularity in Renaissance-Humanistic rhetoric of the conceptual pair simulation/dissimulation, for which Tacitus again is Botero's source. As Botero sees it, whenever it is possible, the ruler should seek advice, before he acts. And in this respect advisers

[37] F. Horkay Hörcher, *Prudencia, kairosz, decorum. A konzervativizmus időszemléletéről* (*Prudence, Kairos, Decorum: Of the Temporal Thinking of Conservatism)*, "Információs társadalom: társadalomtudományi folyóirat" 2006, 6 (4), p. 61–80.

with practical experience (*pratica*) [51] are the better choice than theoretically minded advisers, because their advice is better tuned to the demands of the moment, and less likely to be lost among real circumstances. With this idea Botero once again turns back to Aristotle (as opposed to Plato), when he compares the judgement (*giudici*o) of experienced men (*essercitati*) [70] to that of the learned. In subchapter 9 of *On the avoidance of Novelty* (*del non far nouità*) he claims that experience favours things that have been tried, while change itself is always risky. To insist on things and procedures which have already proved useful is a rational choice. Here the reference is Roman, the history by Titus Livius, according to which "no change from former ways is welcome; men prefer the old ways unless they are obviously bad in practice" [51].[38]

Furthermore, the preservation of the power of the ruler depends on reputation, in other words on the evaluation (*riputatione*) of his earlier activity. The legitimacy of power is more decisively determined by the virtue attributed by others to the prince, his valour, than by his actual potential (*potenza*) [72]. For subjects to accept the rule of their prince, there is always a need for a fictive element, which is more important, than the actual material reality of power. Fiction depends on rhetoric. In other words, rhetorical means are all important in political games. But rhetoric is not enough: the real impact upon the people, royal reputation, is achieved by the deeds of the ruler, not his words. Now the question arises: how exactly did Botero negotiate between the claim about the fictive nature of power and the weight of real action as opposed to words?

There is no real contradiction here, the two claims do not exclude each other. On the contrary, both of them are important building blocks of Botero's early-modern political realism. Suppositions, fiction, and acceptance by the other party can play such a major role in the preservation of political power, because imagination is such an important part of human consciousness, and imagination attributes a lot of significance to these modes of perception. To fancy something can become a real (political) deed, too, therefore to influence imagination is in the interest of political agents. Therefore, as pointed out already by Machiavelli, what matters is not only the facts about a statesman, but also the effects that they can trigger in other minds, through which the statesman earns his social prestige. The recognition of the importance of imagination is a constitutive element of political realism. However, there is a purely Aristotelian principle behind this recognition: that a politician needs to avoid extremes (*estremi*), and has to show maturity (*mature*) and moderation (*moderato*) [79]. When this principle is accepted we can explain why we need to rate truth (*verità)* above suppositions (*opinione*) [80]: truth is usually somewhere in between the extremes of suppositions. The priority of the middle way can lead people to temperance (*temperanza*) [97], and the clearly Christian virtue of faith (*Religione*) [88, 92]. It is here that Botero's ruler confronts the most important constraints of his potential field of action: the divine law (*legge di Dio*) [89], which cannot be disregarded by any ruler. Reason of state cannot provide the grounds to justify trespassing divine legislation. On the contrary: the ruler's will must always give priority to God's will. Religion provides in this sense the foundation of society – as in Cicero's political thought.

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[38] See: T. Livius, *The History of Rome, 1–8*, XXXIV, 54, 8 (1853 edition; Project Gutenberg).

In other words in Botero's line of argument prudence is not a principle which can even push the traditional, ancient-Christian doctrine of virtues into the background, much less demolish them. However, while it fits well into its scheme, it lends that doctrine a realist political tone, which helps the ruler (and the particular political agent in general) find the right action under pressure with the help of a sense of discretion, respecting universal constraints upon his freedom of choice. Even in connection with divine law Botero returns to the virtue of moderation, without which none of the other cardinal virtues could prevail. The emphasis on the social use of religion brings Botero's theory close to Cicero's earlier Roman conception, integrating Christian virtues into the tradition of ancient virtues. In this respect, Botero's theory resembles Thomist and humanist ways of thinking, in that it squares two different traditions: ancient philosophy and Christian moral theology. But it does so in a way which leads to the foundation of a new discourse, already addressing some of the problems of modern societies, including a widened private realm along with the harmonisation of the private and the public interest. The real achievement of Botero's theory is that it does this without the radical break which is so obtrusive in Machiavelli's *The Prince*.

Postscript. The grand narrative of reason of state: From Botero to Richelieu, Metternich, and Kissinger

As we have seen, it was not Botero who invented the discourse of reason of state, but he was the first one who built its most important conceptual elements into a theoretical structure. We have good reasons to regard him as the founder of the discourse, even if the term itself was already in use long before his time, in the *oeuvre* of authors like Guicciardini and Della Casa. In the final part of this paper let us have an overview of the consequences of the birth of this new discourse, in the context of early-modern and modern ways of talking about international relations.

The starting point of our history is the French translation of Botero's 1589 book, which was published in 1599 as *Raison et gouvernement d'estat*. It was translated by Gabriel Chappuys, and published in Paris. With it a process was started, which was unfolding not only on a theoretical-ideological level, but also in terms of power politics within the confines of the Thirty Years' War, turning the Italian doctrine into a French one. Instead of principalities it came to be applied to monarchies and other forms of larger centralised absolutistic states. This application is exemplified by Cardinal Richelieu who used the concept and the theory behind it to realise his plans of state building, by deceit if necessary, and by force if that was what was needed. The term's French translation, *raison d'état* began a new life, independently from its original Italian context, but closely connected to Richelieu's person and the context of the court of Louis XIV in the eyes of posterity.[39] Richelieu was not only a great statesman, he tried to put down in words his own theory of politics, which allows us to consult it directly.

[39] T. Poole, *Reason of State: Law, Prerogative, Empire*, Cambridge 2015, p. 98. The author refers to a conceptual distinction by Philip Bobbit, differentiating between an Italian and a French model, beside

Richelieu did not live long enough to see the result of the Thirty Years' War, his masterwork was crowned therefore by his follower, Cardinal Mazarin. The peace treaties of Westphalia, planned by the latter, which ended the long decades of Europe-wide wars, regulated the relations of sovereign states by introducing a new, global real political principle: the ideal of the balance of power. From Westphalia a straight, but bumpy road lead to the Peace of Vienna in the early 19th century which aimed at a closure of the Napoleonic invasion similar to the one which closed the Thirty Years' War earlier. Here again the primary aim was to establish a continental peace system. In the context of the early 19th century it could be achieved by a continental agreement of the major players, including France. The decisive influence during the negotiation process, Richelieu's 19th century counterpart, was Prince Metternich, who was a very skilful statesman and diplomat, and could convince the competing partners to accept his own scenario. The first condition of this success was to prefer the reliable experience of the past not only about the nature of politics, but specifically, too, about the particular interests of the individual players, and about the geopolitical realities of the European society of states. That Metternich was in possession of such knowledge is once again proven by written text, his *Memoires*:

> Politics is the science of the vital interests of States in its widest meaning. Since, however, an isolated state no longer exists […] we must always view the society of states as the essential condition of the modern world […]. The great axioms of political science proceed from the knowledge of the true political interests of all states, it is upon these general interests that rests the guarantee of their existence […]. The establishing of international relations, on the basis of reciprocity under the guarantee of respect for acquired rights […] constitutes in our time the essence of politics.[40]

In other words, Metternich had already recognised, that what he needed to stabilise was not simply a country or an empire, but a whole global (or at least continental) order, a society of states. And although his achievement can be legitimately criticised if we take into account how long and to what degree he was deaf to the demands of liberty among the populaces of these continental states, in other words how far he was unable to make sense of the internal dynamics of European societies, he was for a long time successful to arrest the more aggressive, warlike manifestations of competition among the newly born nation states within the concert of European powers in Europe itself. Taking into account the later effects of the Holy Alliance that he initiated, including the horrors of World War I, his actual historical performance does not seem so glorious. And yet, the Versailles peace system, which concluded World War I, was even more fragile, and brought within itself the germ of an even more catastrophic event, World War II and the Holocaust.

It was within this context that the initiation of a new science of international relations became urgent. The European-wide disasters of war, with their unimaginable destruction of human life, including the death camps themselves, demanded novel solutions from

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a German one, marked by the term *Staats raison* (or *Staatsräson*). Significantly, this latter term refers also to the birth of the territorial state – which in the case of Germany means Prussia and the statecraft and bureaucratic machinery of Frederick the Great. Ph. Bobbit, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace, and the Course of History*, New York 2002.

[40] C. Metternich, *Mémoires, documents et écrits divers laissés par le Prince de Metternich, chancelier de cour et d'Etat*, Vol. 1, Paris 1881–1886, p. 30.

the victorious super-powers as well. It was in this traumatic historical situation, that a talented and politically motivated Harvard student of European origins wrote his doctoral thesis. The title of the work was: *Peace, Legitimacy, and the Equilibrium (A Study of the Statesmanship of Castlereagh and Metternich)* (1954), and its author was Henry Kissinger.[41] Born in Germany into a Jewish family, he had to escape from the Hitler regime in Germany with his family in 1938. The young academic kept searching for the right moment to make a memorable entry into the realm of foreign policy of his new home country, the US, which was taking over a world-dominating role in those years. His doctoral thesis was of course much more than simply an old fashioned narrative of political or diplomatic history. In it he prepared and worked out his famous *Realpolitik*, in connection with European diplomacy but within the framework of the newly emerging study of international relations.

With this last link, which connects the future American Secretary of State and his famous idol, the Cardinal of the 19th century European Holy Alliance, we could indirectly hint at the connection between the Italian humanist and Jesuit, Giovanni Botero, who established the doctrine of reason of state, and the American foreign policy expert, and proponent of realistic policies, Henry Kissinger, who was himself blessed with a vast amount of historical and theoretical background knowledge. Kissinger's academic and political success supports our initial thesis, that in order to make sense of the political challenges of our day it is crucial to pay attention to history. Therefore we need the historical turn, which brings into contact the science of international relations with the history of political thought. To fully justify this thesis in the abstract, however, requires another paper, as the topic stretches well beyond what can be expected in a paper on Botero and reason of state. Yet the paper hopefully could show the relevance of its particular author for our present concerns, political and economic, national and global, and this is all that it aspired to.

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