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10. The Political Thought of Machiavelli

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10. The Political Thought of Machiavelli

Abstract

The national state in Western Europe was a new institution, without precedent in the European World. Its rise and almost immediate conflict with the Church challenged political theorists to reexamine the assumptions of a universal church in a universal empire upon which the theory of the two swords was based. These assumptions were so generally accepted that they were not easily abandoned. In the fourteenth century Marsiglia of Padua, for all his disinterest in the two swords, had arrived at his conclusions without denying either the existence of a universal church or the validity of the traditional morality. Other writers who defended the concentration of authority in royal hands sometimes stressed the power accorded the prince in Roman law or appealed to the need for a firm hand in maintaining peace and order in the state. But these writers remained firmly committed to an ideal of justice in political relationship which had its origin in Greek, Roman, and Christian sources. It remained for a figure of the Italian Renaissance, Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), to make the decisive break with the past, which indeed Marsiglia had foreshadowed, an divorce politics from morality. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Contemporary Civilization, politics, government, nation state, two swords theory, morality, Marsiglio, Machiavelli

Disciplines

European History | European Languages and Societies | History | Intellectual History | Medieval History | Political History

Comments

This is a part of [Section V: The Rise of Capitalism and the National State to 1500](#). The [Contemporary Civilization](#) page lists all additional sections of *Ideas and Institutions of Western Man*, as well as the [Table of Contents](#) for both volumes.

More About Contemporary Civilization:

From 1947 through 1969, all first-year Gettysburg College students took a two-semester course called Contemporary Civilization. The course was developed at President Henry W.A. Hanson's request with the goal of "introducing the student to the backgrounds of contemporary social problems through the major concepts, ideals, hopes and motivations of western culture since the Middle Ages."

Gettysburg College professors from the history, philosophy, and religion departments developed a textbook for the course. The first edition, published in 1955, was called *An Introduction to Contemporary Civilization and Its Problems*. A second edition, retitled *Ideas and Institutions of Western Man*, was published in 1958 and 1960. It is this second edition that we include here. The copy we digitized is from the Gary T. Hawbaker '66 Collection and the marginalia are his.

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10. The Political Thought of Machiavelli

Political changes as fundamental and widespread as those described in the preceding pages were bound to have an effect on what men thought about the nature of political authority in general. During the Middle Ages most of this thinking could be associated in some way or another with the theory of the two swords. One of the primary characteristics of this theory was its tendency to idealize political relationships by describing

put in words what is ^{being} put in action.

the state as it ought to be. Political behavior was to be judged on the basis of its conformity to principles of traditional Christian morality.

The national state in Western Europe was a new institution, without precedent in the European World. Its rise and almost immediate conflict with the Church challenged political theorists to reexamine the assumptions of a universal church in a universal empire upon which the theory of the two swords was based. These assumptions were so generally accepted that they were not easily abandoned. In the fourteenth century Marsiglio of Padua, for all his disinterest in the two swords, had arrived at his conclusions without denying either the existence of a universal church or the validity of the traditional morality. Other writers who defended the concentration of authority in royal hands sometimes stressed the power accorded the prince in Roman law or appealed to the need for a firm hand in maintaining peace and order in the state. But these writers remained firmly committed to an ideal of justice in political relationship which had its origin in Greek, Roman, and Christian sources. It remained for a figure of the Italian Renaissance, Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), to make the decisive break with the past, which indeed Marsiglio had foreshadowed, and divorce politics from morality.

The son of a bourgeois family, Machiavelli was born in Florence when that city was still the leading Italian Renaissance center, while the War of the Roses was raging in England, during the reign of Louis XI in France, and in the same year that Ferdinand and Isabella were united in marriage in Spain. His early impressions of politics were influenced by the wars, intrigues, conspiracies, and double-dealing characteristic of many of the political leaders of the day. He entered public life in Florence in 1494, the year in which French troops invaded Italy and expelled the Medici from control of the city. Machiavelli rose to a prominent position, the duties of which required him to travel from time to time on various diplomatic missions. In the course of his travels he carefully acquired a knowledge and appreciation of the workings of Italian diplomacy and the way government operated in France and Germany. In 1502 he was sent as envoy to Cesare Borgia (1476-1507), who with the help of his father, Pope Alexander VI, and the French had carved out for himself a duchy in northern Italy. Machiavelli's initial hostility toward the new duke of Romagna was soon replaced by admiration for his always direct and often brutal methods. The experience gained in watching this unscrupulous prince in action fixed itself indelibly on the young diplomat's mind.

Back in Florence, Machiavelli persuaded the government to institute a military force composed of citizens instead of mercenary troops. This innovation did not prevent the restoration of the Medici, with the help of Spanish troops, in 1512. Machiavelli was suspected of plotting against the new government and after a temporary imprisonment he was sent into exile. This enforced withdrawal was an unhappy change for one who for almost two decades had been in the center of affairs. Machiavelli used

Machiavellian Cynical, will do anything to get gain, low esteem for human beings.

his remaining years in writing and in trying to return to political life in Florence. In the year 1513 he completed the two works which have made his name immortal: Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius and The Prince.

If Machiavelli expected that The Prince, which he dedicated to one of the Medici, would persuade them to restore him to power, he was doomed to disappointment, since they gave him only brief preferment before his death in 1527. However, the views which he expressed reached a wide audience and soon he became the center of a lively controversy which has not yet ended and which gives every promise of continuing into the future. The difference of opinion reduces itself to the question: Was Machiavelli firmly committed to the opportunistic and cynical methods which have given rise to the term "Machiavellianism," or has he been grossly misunderstood? Was he more seriously concerned with the ultimate establishment of republican institutions? Perhaps it would be correct to say that The Prince, which was his more famous work and upon which Machiavellianism is primarily based, was more concerned with methods because its author had an immediate and practical purpose in mind. However, there is good evidence that the Discourses grew out of the same line of thought that produced The Prince.

Machiavelli perceived clearly that the political evolution of Europe was toward centralization of power and an inchoate sense of national unity. He saw that Italy was running counter to this trend. It was divided against itself, it was invaded time and time again, and it seemed to have no will to resist either of these calamities. While perhaps not clearly, Machiavelli thought of Italy as a political unit, as it had once been. His patriotism was one of the guiding forces in his life. In the Discourses, he looked back into the history of the Roman Republic in search of those qualities which had once made Italy great. He believed that he found them in the intelligence and devotion to duty of the ruling classes, in the patriotism of the citizen-soldier, and in the civic religion which bound both ruler and citizen together. Machiavelli lauds such a republic, in which popular institutions would check one another, where liberty would reign, and where property would be secure.

In attempting to explain why the Roman Republic had fallen, Machiavelli arrived at an evaluation of human nature. He believed that men were basically fearful, selfish, aggressive, and motivated by a love of power. This evaluation was not un-Christian, but whereas the Christian held that human nature could be directed to a higher, transcendent end, Machiavelli seems to have abandoned this for a different end. Cynically, he accepted human nature as he took it to be. All human institutions are bound to collapse, because they are the work of hopelessly corrupt men. His philosophy of history was more nearly Greek than Christian. Believing that the pattern of history was cyclical, he had to conclude that the circumstances which made the Roman Republic possible were bound to pass and that similar circum-

stances would again reappear. Since to a certain extent the affairs of men are subject to fortune, there are only limited changes which courageous men can effect in this pattern.

It is at this point that some of the most bitter criticism has been directed against Machiavelli. He seems to have believed that in sixteenth century Italy the virtues which he associated with the Roman Republic were simply unrealistic. He was convinced that the many examples of good faith bringing failure and bad faith bringing success which he himself had experienced as a diplomat could not be explained away. He sought to direct human actions to the highest practical end which he knew. This was the good of the community and by community he meant Italy. He was prepared to say that a good end, such as order in a united Italy, was worth the price. The price was spelled out in The Prince, as the selection which follows illustrates.

At the conclusion of this work the hard-boiled political realist launches into an emotional appeal to Italian patriotism which is quite out of keeping with everything which precedes it. This appeal was unsuccessful in spreading Machiavelli's own patriotism or in inducing any prince to attempt his methods for uniting the peninsula. It is instructive to speculate on how lasting an Italian state would have been at this time without the national sentiment which Machiavelli surely knew scarcely existed.

Niccolo Machiavelli to the Magnificent Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici

It is customary for such as seek a Prince's favour, to present themselves before him with those things of theirs which they themselves most value, or in which they perceive him chiefly to delight. Accordingly, we often see horses, armour, cloth of gold, precious stones, and the like costly gifts, offered to Princes as worthy of their greatness. Desiring in like manner to approach your Magnificence with some token of my devotion, I have found among my possessions none that I so much prize and esteem as a knowledge of the actions of great men, acquired in the course of a long experience of modern affairs and a continual study of antiquity. Which knowledge more carefully and patiently pondered over and sifted by me, and now reduced into this little book, I send to your Magnificence. And though I deem the work unworthy of your greatness, yet am I bold enough to hope that your courtesy will dispose you to accept it, considering that I can offer you no better gift than the means of mastering in a very brief time, all that in the course of so many years, and at the cost of so many hardships and dangers, I have learned, and know.

*token is
knowledge
gained by
experience*

This work I have not adorned or amplified with rounded periods, swelling and highflown language, or any other of those extrinsic attractions and allurements wherewith many

authors are wont to set off and grace their writings; since it is my desire that it should either pass wholly unhonoured, or that the truth of its matter and the importance of its subject should alone recommend it.

Nor would I have it thought presumption that a person of very mean and humble station should venture to discourse and lay down rules concerning the government of Princes. For as those who make maps of countries place themselves low down in the plains to study the character of mountains and elevated lands, and place themselves high up on the mountains to get a better view of the plains, so in like manner to understand the People a man should be a Prince, and to have a clear notion of Princes he should belong to the People.

Let your Magnificence, then, accept this little gift in the spirit in which I offer it; wherein, if you diligently read and study it, you will recognize my extreme desire that you should attain to that eminence which Fortune and your own merits promise you. [Should you from the height of your greatness some time turn your eyes to these humbler regions, you will become aware how undeservedly I have to endure the keen and unremitting malignity of Fortune.] *Medici might help him.*

[In the first chapters of The Prince, Machiavelli discusses the different kinds of princely states and the ways in which they can be governed successfully. Drawing upon the experience of the past as well as that of his own day, he analyzes the problems of effective government under various conditions and offers possible solutions. Of particular interest is the manner in which he deals with states controlled in the name of the Church. He dismisses them summarily by declaring that "inasmuch as they are sustained by agencies of a higher nature than the mind of man can reach...he would be a rash and presumptuous man who should venture to discuss them."]

Chapter XIV - Of the Duty of a Prince in Respect of Military Affairs

A Prince, therefore, should have no care or thought but for war, and for the regulations and training it requires, and should apply himself exclusively to this as his peculiar province; for war is the sole art looked for in one who rules, and is of such efficacy that it not merely maintains those who are born Princes, but often enables men to rise to that eminence from a private station; while, on the other hand, we often see that when Princes devote themselves rather to pleasure than to arms, they lose their dominions. And as neglect of this art is the prime cause of such calamities, so to be a proficient in it is the surest way to acquire power. Francesco Sforza, from his renown in arms, rose from privacy to be Duke of Milan, while his descendants, seeking to avoid the hardships and fatigues of military life, from being Princes fell back into privacy.

For among other causes of misfortune which your not being armed brings upon you, it makes you despised, and this is one of those reproaches against which, as shall presently be explained, a Prince ought most carefully to guard.

Between an armed and an unarmed man no proportion holds, and it is contrary to reason to expect that the armed man should voluntarily submit to him who is unarmed, or that the unarmed man should stand secure among armed retainers. For with contempt on one side, and distrust on the other, it is impossible that men should work well together. Wherefore, as has already been said, a Prince who is ignorant of military affairs, besides other disadvantages, can neither be respected by his soldiers, nor can he trust them. A Prince, therefore, ought never to allow his attention to be diverted from warlike pursuits, and should occupy himself with them even more in peace than in war. This he can do in two ways, by practice or by study.

As to the practice, he ought, besides keeping his soldiers well trained and disciplined, to be constantly engaged in the chase, that he may inure his body to hardships and fatigue, and gain at the same time a knowledge of places, by observing how the mountains slope, the valleys open, and the plains spread; acquainting himself with the characters of rivers and marshes, and giving the greatest attention to this subject. Such knowledge is useful to him in two ways; for first, he learns thereby to know his own country, and to understand better how it may be defended; and next, from his familiar acquaintance with its localities, he readily comprehends the character of other districts when obliged to observe them for the first time. For the hills, valleys, plains, rivers, and marshes of Tuscany, for example, have a certain resemblance to those elsewhere; so that from a knowledge of the natural features of that province, similar knowledge in respect of other provinces may readily be gained. The Prince who is wanting in this kind of knowledge, is wanting in the first qualification of a good captain, for by it he is taught how to surprise an enemy, how to choose an encampment, how to lead his army on a march, how to array it for battle, and how to post it to the best advantage for a siege.

Among the commendations which Philopoemon, Prince of the Achaians, has received from historians is this -- that in times of peace he was always thinking of methods of warfare, so that when walking in the country with his friends he would often stop and talk with them on the subject. 'If the enemy,' he would say, 'were posted on that hill, and we found ourselves here with our army, which of us would have the better position? How could we most safely and in the best order advance to meet them? If we had to retreat, what direction should we take? If they retired, how should we pursue?' In this way he put to his friends, as he went along, all the contingencies that can befall an army. He listened to their opinions,

stated his own, and supported them with reasons; and from his being constantly occupied with such meditations, it resulted, that when in actual command no complication could ever present itself with which he was not prepared to deal.

As to the mental training of which we have spoken, a Prince should read histories, and in these should note the actions of great men, observe how they conducted themselves in their wars, and examine the causes of their victories and defeats, so as to avoid the latter and imitate them in the former. And above all, he should, as many great men of past ages have done, assume for his models those persons who before his time have been renowned and celebrated, whose deeds and achievements he should constantly keep in mind, as it is related that Alexander the Great sought to resemble Achilles, Caesar Alexander, and Scipio Cyrus. And any one who reads the life of this last-named hero, written by Xenophon, recognizes afterwards in the life of Scipio, how much this imitation was the source of his glory, and how nearly in his chastity, affability, kindness, and generosity, he conformed to the character of Cyrus as Xenophon describes it.

[A wise Prince, therefore, should pursue such methods as these, never resting idle in times of peace, but strenuously seeking to turn them to account, so that he may derive strength from them in the hour of danger, and find himself ready should Fortune turn against him, to resist her blows.]

Chapter XV - Of the Qualities in Respect of Which Men, and Most of All Princes, Are Praised or Blamed

It now remains for us to consider what ought to be the conduct and bearing of a Prince in relation to his subjects and friends. And since I know that many have written on this subject, I fear it may be thought presumptuous in me to write of it also; the more so, because in my treatment of it I depart from the views that others have taken.

But since it is my object to write what shall be useful to whosoever understands it, it seems to me better to follow the real truth of things than an imaginary view of them. For many Republics and Princedoms have been imagined that were never seen or known to exist in reality. And the manner in which we live, and that in which we ought to live, are things so wide asunder, that he who quits the one to betake himself to the other is more likely to destroy than to save himself; since any one who would act up to a perfect standard of goodness in everything, must be ruined among so many who are not good. It is essential, therefore, for a Prince who desires to maintain his position, to have learned how to be other than good, and to use or not to use his goodness as necessity requires.

Laying aside, therefore, all fanciful notions concerning

No use of trying to construct a state as man should live. Says start with man as they are. He was active in politics, lost out, got his revenge by using pen + paper. Saw fighting among his peoples

Plato's Republic

a Prince, and considering those only that are true, I say that all men when they are spoken of, and Princes more than others from their being set so high, are characterized by some one of those qualities which attach either praise or blame. Thus one is accounted liberal, another miserly (which word I use, rather than avaricious, to denote the man who is too sparing of what is his own, avarice being the disposition to take wrongfully what is another's); one is generous, another greedy; one cruel, another tender-hearted; one is faithless, another true to his word; one effeminate and cowardly, another high-spirited and courageous; one is courteous, another haughty; one impure, another chaste; one simple, another crafty; one firm, another facile; one grave, another frivolous; one devout, another unbelieving; and the like. Every one, I know, will admit that it would be most laudable for a Prince to be endowed with all of the above qualities that are reckoned good; but since it is impossible for him to possess or constantly practise them all, the conditions of human nature not allowing it, he must be discreet enough to know how to avoid the infamy of those vices that would deprive him of his government, and, if possible, be on his guard also against those which might not deprive him of it; though if he cannot wholly restrain himself, he may with less scruple indulge in the latter. He need never hesitate, however, to incur the reproach of those vices without which his authority can hardly be preserved; for if he well consider the whole matter, he will find that there may be a line of conduct having the appearance of virtue, to follow which would be his ruin, and that there may be another course having the appearance of vice, by following which his safety and wellbeing are secured.

Chapter XVII - Of Cruelty and Clemency, and Whether it is Better to be Loved or Feared

Passing to the other qualities above referred to, I say that every Prince should desire to be accounted merciful and not cruel. Nevertheless, he should be on his guard against the abuse of this quality of mercy. Cesare Borgia was reputed cruel, yet his cruelty restored Romagna, united it, and brought it to order and obedience; so that if we look at things in their true light, it will be seen that he was in reality far more merciful than the people of Florence, who, to avoid the imputation of cruelty, suffered Pistoja to be torn to pieces by factions.

A Prince should therefore disregard the reproach of being thought cruel where it enables him to keep his subjects united and obedient. For he who quells disorder by a very few signal examples will in the end be more merciful than he who from too great leniency permits things to take their course and so to result in rapine and bloodshed; for these hurt the whole State, whereas the severities of the Prince injure individuals only.

*Prince based on human nature.
Ultimate goal of this writing - moral regeneration of Italy
re birth of Italians, the means could be anything. Get rid of foreigners
and reunite Italy.*

And for a new Prince, of all others, it is impossible to escape a name for cruelty, since new States are full of dangers. Wherefore Virgil, by the mouth of Dido, excuses the harshness of her reign on the plea that it was new, saying:--

'A fate unkind, and newness in my reign
Compel me thus to guard a wide domain.'

Nevertheless, the new Prince should not be too ready of belief, nor too easily set in motion; nor should he himself be the first to raise alarms; but should so temper prudence with kindness that too great confidence in others shall not throw him off his guard, nor groundless distrust render him insupportable.]

And here comes in the question whether it is better to be loved rather than feared, or feared rather than loved. It might perhaps be answered that we should wish to be both; but since love and fear can hardly exist together, if we must choose between them, it is far safer to be feared than loved. For of men it may generally be affirmed that they are thankless, fickle, false, studious to avoid danger, greedy of gain, devoted to you while you are able to confer benefits upon them, and ready, as I said before, while danger is distant, to shed their blood, and sacrifice their property, their lives, and their children for you; but in the hour of need they turn against you. The Prince, therefore, who without otherwise securing himself builds wholly on their professions is undone. For the friendships which we buy with a price, and do not gain by greatness and nobility of character, though they be fairly earned are not made good, but fail us when we have occasion to use them.

Moreover, men are less careful how they offend him who makes himself loved than him who makes himself feared. For love is held by the tie of obligation, which, because men are a sorry breed, is broken on every whisper of private interest; but fear is bound by the apprehension of punishment which never relaxes its grasp.

Nevertheless a Prince should inspire fear in such a fashion that if he do not win love he may escape hate. For a man may very well be feared and yet not hated, and this will be the case so long as he does not meddle with the property or with the women of his citizens and subjects. And if constrained to put any to death, he should do so only when there is manifest cause or reasonable justification. But, above all, he must abstain from the property of others. For men will sooner forget the death of their father than the loss of their patrimony. Moreover, pretexts for confiscation are never to seek, and he who has once begun to live by rapine always finds reasons for taking what is not his; whereas reasons for shedding blood are fewer, and sooner exhausted....

[Returning to the question of being loved or feared, I sum up by saying, that since his being loved depends upon his subjects, while his being feared depends upon himself, a wise Prince should build on what is his own, and not on

*Concept of human nature
The ends justify the means.
What kind of ~~man~~ should be cruel to an extent*

what rests with others. Only, as I have said, he must do his utmost to escape hatred.

Chapter XVIII - How Princes Should Keep Faith

Every one understands how praiseworthy it is in a Prince to keep faith, and to live uprightly and not craftily. Nevertheless, we see from what has taken place in our own days that Princes who have set little store by their word, but have known how to overreach men by their cunning, have accomplished great things, and in the end got the better of those who trusted to honest dealing.

Be it known, then, that there are two ways of contending, one in accordance with the laws, the other by force; the first of which is proper to men, the second to beasts. But since the first method is often ineffectual, it becomes necessary to resort to the second. A Prince should, therefore, understand how to use well both the man and the beast. And this lesson has been covertly taught by the ancient writers, who relate how Achilles and many others of these old Princes were given over to be brought up and trained by Chiron the Centaur; since the only meaning of their having for instructor one who was half man and half beast is, that it is necessary for a Prince to know how to use both natures, and that the one without the other has no stability.

But since a Prince should know how to use the beast's nature wisely, he ought of beasts to choose both the lion and the fox; for the lion cannot guard himself from the toils, nor the fox from wolves. He must therefore be a fox to discern toils, and a lion to drive off wolves.

To rely wholly on the lion is unwise; and for this reason a prudent Prince neither can nor ought to keep his word when to keep it is hurtful to him and the causes which led him to pledge it are removed. If all men were good, this would not be good advice, but since they are dishonest and do not keep faith with you, you, in return, need not keep faith with them; and no Prince was ever at a loss for plausible reasons to cloak a breach of faith. Of this numberless recent instances could be given, and it might be shown how many solemn treaties and engagements have been rendered inoperative and idle through want of faith in Princes, and that he who has best known to play the fox has had the best success.

It is necessary, indeed, to put a good colour on this nature, and to be skilful in simulating and dissembling. But men are so simple, and governed so absolutely by their present needs, that he who wishes to deceive will never fail in finding willing dupes. One recent example I will not omit. Pope Alexander VI had no care or thought but how to deceive, and always found material to work on. No man ever had a more effective manner of asseverating, or made promises with more solemn protestations, or observed them less. And yet, because he understood this side of human nature, his frauds always succeeded.

*Sacrifice a few people for the good of all?
Must study war. State will finally depend on force.
Geography, history - to know the actions of great men.*

It is not essential, then, that a Prince should have all the good qualities which I have enumerated above, but it is most essential that he should seem to have them; I will even venture to affirm that if he has and invariably practises them all, they are hurtful, whereas the appearance of having them is useful. Thus, it is well to seem merciful, faithful, humane, religious, and upright, and also to be so; but the mind should remain so balanced that were it needful not to be so, you should be able and know how to change to the contrary.

And you are to understand that a Prince, and most of all a new Prince, cannot observe all those rules of conduct in respect whereof men are accounted good, being often forced, in order to preserve his Principedom, to act in opposition to good faith, charity, humanity, and religion. He must therefore keep his mind ready to shift as the winds and tides of Fortune turn, and, as I have already said, he ought not to quit good courses if he can help it, but should know how to follow evil courses if he must.

A Prince should therefore be very careful that nothing ever escapes his lips which is not replete with the five qualities above named, so that to see and hear him, one would think him the embodiment of mercy, good faith, integrity, humanity, and religion. And there is no virtue which it is more necessary for him to seem to possess than this last; because men in general judge rather by the eye than by the hand, for every one can see but few can touch. Every one sees what you seem, but few know what you are, and these few dare not oppose themselves to the opinion of the many who have the majesty of the State to back them up.

Moreover, in the actions of all men, and most of all of Princes, where there is no tribunal to which we can appeal, we look to results. Wherefore if a Prince succeeds in establishing and maintaining his authority, the means will always be judged honourable and be approved by every one. For the vulgar are always taken by appearances and by results, and the world is made up of the vulgar, the few only finding room when the many have no longer ground to stand on.

A certain Prince of our own days, whose name it is as well not to mention, is always preaching peace and good faith, although the mortal enemy of both; and both, had he practised them as he preaches them, would, oftener than once, have lost him his kingdom and authority.

Chapter XXVI - An Exhortation to Liberate Italy from the Barbarians

Turning over in my mind all the matters which have above been considered, and debating with myself whether in Italy at the present hour the times are such as might serve to confer honour on a new Prince, and whether a fit

opportunity now offers for a prudent and valiant leader to bring about changes glorious for himself and beneficial to the whole Italian people, it seems to me that so many conditions combine to further such an enterprise, that I know of no time so favourable to it as the present. And if, as I have said, it was necessary in order to display the valour of Moses that the children of Israel should be slaves in Egypt, and to know the greatness and courage of Cyrus that the Persians should be oppressed by the Medes, and to illustrate the excellence of Theseus that the Athenians should be scattered and divided, so at this hour, to prove the worth of some Italian hero, it was required that Italy should be brought to her present abject condition, to be more a slave than the Hebrew, more oppressed than the Persian, more disunited than the Athenian, without a head, without order, beaten, spoiled, torn in pieces, over-run and abandoned to destruction in every shape.

But though, heretofore, glimmerings may have been discerned in this man or that, whence it might be conjectured that he was ordained by God for her redemption, nevertheless it has afterwards been seen in the further course of his actions that Fortune has disowned him; so that our country, left almost without life, still waits to know who it is that is to heal her bruises, to put an end to the devastation and plunder of Lombardy, to the exactions and imposts of Naples and Tuscany, and to stanch those wounds of hers which long neglect has changed into running sores.

We see how she prays God to send some one to rescue her from these barbarous cruelties and oppressions. We see too how ready and eager she is to follow any standard were there only some one to raise it. But at present we see no one except in your illustrious House (pre-eminent by its virtues and good fortune, and favoured by God and by the Church whose headship it now holds), who could undertake the part of a deliverer.

But for you this will not be too hard a task, if you keep before your eyes the lives and actions of those whom I have named above. For although these men were singular and extraordinary, after all they were but men, not one of whom had so great an opportunity as now presents itself to you. For their undertakings were not more just than this, nor more easy, nor was God more their friend than yours. The justice of the cause is conspicuous; for that war is just which is necessary, and those arms are sacred from which we derive our only hope. Everywhere there is the strongest disposition to engage in this cause; and where the disposition is strong the difficulty cannot be great, provided you follow the methods observed by those whom I have set before you as models.

But further, we see here extraordinary and unexampled proofs of Divine favour. The sea has been divided; the cloud has attended you on your way; the rock has flowed with water; the manna has rained from heaven; everything has concurred to promote your greatness. What remains to

be done must be done by you; since in order not to deprive us of our free will and such share of glory as belongs to us, God will not do everything himself.

Nor is it to be marvelled at if none of those Italians I have named has been able to effect what we hope to see effected by your illustrious House; or that amid so many revolutions and so many warlike movements it should always appear as though the military virtues of Italy were spent; for this comes from her old system being defective, and from no one being found among us capable to strike out a new. Nothing confers such honour on the reformer of a State, as do the new laws and institutions which he devises; for these when they stand on a solid basis and have a greatness in their scope, make him admired and venerated. And in Italy material is not wanting for improvement in every form. If the head be weak the limbs are strong, and we see daily in single combats, or where few are engaged, how superior are the strength, dexterity, and intelligence of Italians. But when it comes to armies, they are nowhere, and this from no other reason than the defects of their leaders. For those who are skilful in arms will not obey, and every one thinks himself skilful, since hitherto we have had none among us so raised by merit or by fortune above his fellows that they should yield him the palm. And hence it happens that for the long period of twenty years, during which so many wars have taken place, whenever there has been an army purely Italian it has always been beaten. To this testify, first Taro, then Alessandria, Capua, Genoa, Vaila, Bologna, Mestri.

If then your illustrious House should seek to follow the example of those great men who have delivered their country in past ages, it is before all things necessary, as the true foundation of every such attempt, to be provided with national troops, since you can have no braver, truer, or more faithful soldiers; and although every single man of them be good, collectively they will be better, seeing themselves commanded by their own Prince, and honoured and esteemed by him. That you may be able, therefore, to defend yourself against the foreigner with Italian valour, the first step is to provide yourself with an army such as this....

This opportunity then, for Italy at last to look on her deliverer, ought not to be allowed to pass away. With what love he would be received in all those Provinces which have suffered from the foreign inundation, with what thirst for vengeance, with what fixed fidelity, with what devotion, and what tears, no words of mine can declare. What gates would be closed against him? What people would refuse him obedience? What jealousy would stand in his way? What Italian but would yield him homage? This barbarian tyranny stinks in all nostrils.

Let your illustrious House therefore take upon itself this enterprise with all the courage and all the hopes with which a just cause is undertaken; so that under your

standard this our country may be ennobled, and under your
auspices be fulfilled the words of Petrarch:--

'Brief will be the strife
When valour arms against barbaric rage;
For the bold spirit of the bygone age
Still warms Italian hearts with life.' *

In this chapter we have examined the profound changes which altered the economy of Europe in the High and Late Middle Ages. These changes paralleled the equally significant decline of feudalism and rise of national states. The center of political power, especially in western Europe, tended to move from the castle of the feudal lord to the court of the ruler of a larger unit, the national state. In the process the multilevel hierarchy of feudal allegiances was simplified to a two-level relationship between monarch and subject.)

* Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Ninian Hill Thomson (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1897), pp. vii-x, 103-112, 118-122, 124-130, 190-198.