

The Renaissance of political realism in early modern Europe Giovanni Botero and the discourse of “reason of state”¹

Ferenc Hörcher

Hungarian Academy of Sciences

1. The „historical turn” in the discipline of international relations: Richard Tuck and István Hont

People think of the discipline of international relations that it is typically a 20. century sort of science. After all, it searches answers for 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 started to think systematically about the nature of international (in other words, interstate) relations in the interwar and post-war period, respectively, offering a sharp critique 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 look 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”.

(McCourt, 2012) 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 does not aim either at the evaluation of the significance of the historical turn, or at providing a judgement on the challenges confronted by the profession as a result of the turn. Rather, it will only focus at 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 there in the writings of some of the early modern authors and their historians. If you have a look at the classic works of the so called Cambridge school, like Pocock’s *Machiavellian Moment* (Pocock, 1975), or Skinner’s *Foundations of the History of Political Thought* (Skinner, 1978), 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 on early modern subjects with an interest in present day global politics. I will shortly refer here to two representatives of this group,

¹ An earlier, Hungarian language version of this essay is going to be published in 2016.

Richard Tuck and István Hont, who both of them – partly reacting on each other’s works, partly independently from the other – turned towards a historical reconstruction of international relations in the early modern and modern period.²

Richard Tuck, who is at present professor at the Department of Government at Harvard University, researched on the international (or rather European) political thought of the early modern period (16-17. century) under the influence and partly as 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 political, but also in that of economic thought of this period. This is relevant because economics plays 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* (Tuck, 1979). He revealed in the Foreword of his book, that though 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.” (Tuck, 1979: 1) In a second monograph in intellectual history, entitled *Philosophy and Government* (Tuck, 1993) he was investigating the connection between (political) philosophy and the political regimes of the age. In this work he was interested 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 were tried by intellectuals, political thinkers who drifted quite close to politics, to systematise or even legitimise the widening of the schism between political practice and between the Christian norms outlined in moral philosophy. As Tuck showed it, 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.³

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 coedited with Michael Ignatieff. (Hont and Ignatieff, 1983) This work was built on the recent research on the Scottish Enlightenment (in particular, on Hume and Smith), particularly looking at the connections between economy 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

² One should not forget about John Dunn, another Cambridge theorist, who was interested in international relations from very early on.

³ 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 could in fact incorporate new elements into their existing Aristotelian perspective. See the relevant ideas of Tuck 1993, 127-128., referring to Lodovico Zuccolo, Federico Bonaventura and Lodovico Sattala.

only be seen when his own collected volume of essays was published much later. His *Jealousy of Trade* (Hont, 2005) is a complex and magnificent work, tracing scrupulously a tricky and long story about the role commercial jealousy played in the birth of global politics and the ideology of nationalism.⁴ His detailed analysis tries to build up a master narrative of the process how 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 to recover 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) (Leti, 2001: 191-202).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 like a hidden stream Botero and not only with Cardinal Richelieu, but also with Prince Metternich, and finally the theoretical founding fathers of the discipline of international relations (IR) in 20th century US, including Henry Kissinger.

2. 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 a 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 in the century which followed his death. He is interesting for us in this context because he was a key

⁴ The present author published a short review of the essay in Hungarian (Horkay, 2006a)

⁵ In a personal letter 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 him, 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. Email received on 12.20. 2015. I am also grateful to Béla Kapossy and John Robertson for further information of the list of Hont’s students. By now see also Hont, 2015.

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.

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.

a. Some relevant moments of Botero's life

For some time, Botero belonged to the most combative representatives of the reborn Catholic theory and teaching. This is not accidental, as he was educated by the Jesuits, in Palermo and Rome.⁷ Already according to his professors in Rome his was 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 French territory, where at the time of the Massacre of French Huguenots (Protestants) in the Paris of Saint Bartholomew's Day, (August 24/25, 1572) 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 would 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 Padova and Genova were the next stations, for some time he was even considering to travel to America. Looking for new challenges, until on one day when he gave an oration which sharply criticizes the worldly power of the pope, he was called upon to leave the order. To stand on his own feet was made easier by the Milanese Archbishop, Carlo Borromeo, who took the enthusiastic ex-Jesuit under his protection. Botero soon became the Archbishop's secretary, and after his master's death he served the Archbishop's nephew with the same fervour. It is during this period that he published the direct antecedent of his *Della Ragion di Stato*, The book entitled *De regia sapientia* (1583), dedicated to the prince of Savoy, Carlo Emanuele. In this tractatus, written in the scholastic style, the author already represented an Anti-Machiavellian position, which will characterise all the work he published later. Though at first sight his work looked close to the way of writing of the School of Salamanca, however 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. After another French trip, when he possibly met with the increasingly popular treatise of Jean Bodin (*Les Six livres de la République*, 1576), written in the aftermath of the massacre, he started to write his most important works. That is how first *Delle cause della grandezza e magnificenza delle città* was 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 a close proximity, offering a good overview for readers of the wide range of interests of Botero and the complexity of his way of thinking. In the first of them he summed up what he knew about early modern – mostly, but by no means exclusively Italian – cities, obviously relying on first hand experience of the life of Rome and Paris. The second one is a collection of political considerations about how to preserve empires, while the third one is a comparative analysis (like those of Aristotle of Bodin) of the known world as it was

⁷ One of his uncles taught in the Jesuit college in Palermo. See: Bobroff, 2003., 6. <http://ecommons.usask.ca/bitstream/handle/10388/etd-08082005-135926/copyrightthesis.pdf?sequence=1>, (december, 2015)

opened up by geographic discoveries, missions of overseas colonisation and the establishments of long distance trade. Of the three of them, in its own time the last one had the widest impact, but his work on reason of state was also translated into German, French, Spanish and Latin (Burke, 1991: 479.), which means that the kings and subjects of the two countries, which contended for a control of Italy could read his book in their mother tongue, and it was made available for the cultivated readers in Latin translation in other parts of Europe as well. It is known that his work on reason of state caught the attention of the advisor to the Spanish king, Gaspare de Guzman, Count-Duke of Olivares, and that the book was on the reading list of both Maximilian I., *Herzog* of Bayern and *Kurfürst* of the Holy Roman Empire, and of Ferdinand II., Holy Roman Emperor and King of Bohemia and of Hungary. Having achieved such marvellous intellectual performances Botero finished his service by 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 Principi* (1600), and then another collection of more modern examples of statesmanship. But these works could not surpass the influence of his greatest books.

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

By the time he published his volume *On Reason of State*, this concept has 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. (Burke, 1991: 479.) To sum up his intentions in a shorthand form, Botero wanted to reformulate the realist way of thought and talk, something that was invented by Machiavelli, and bear a stamp of infidelity by the time of Botero. His unbalanced relationship to his Florentine predecessor can be characterised by the following two statements: 1.) he accepts the radical innovation of Machiavelli, who is not interested in the moralism of the traditional, Aristotelian-Ciceronian humanist framework, and focuses rather on political reality, 2.) but denies the Machavellian claim that political power – in the name of the common good – can claim authorisation to do whatever it regards to be necessary; in other words Botero tries to lead back the discourse within the framework of the Christian humanist discourse.⁸

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 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 Principe*) and a state (*lo Stato*) (the one as artificer, the other as his material)”⁹(Botero, 1956: 3) Right at the beginning

⁸ In this regard the opposite pole to Machiavelli's position is taken by Erasmus, who in his *The Education of a Christian Prince* (Erasmus, 1516), written three years after *The Prince*, but published earlier than Machiavelli's piece, kept the original Christian humanist framework.

⁹ I used the following English translation of Botero's *The Reason of State*: Botero, 1956. <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015002702705;view=1up;seq=23>, and the following

the author adds to this definition, that although 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.¹⁰ (Botero: 1956: 3)

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)¹¹ 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 is returning later, too – although Botero admits that successful conquest might require power (*forza*), yet preserving is more burdensome, and it might require wisdom (*sapienza*) as well. Interestingly already here he refers to Tacitus, and this way opens up one of the most important possible directions for us to interpret what he has to say.¹² It is perhaps not by chance that (contrary to Machiavelli, who chose to give advice to his prince when the latter has to confront the problems of newly acquired power) Botero's prince seems to be less interested in how to get more power, but rather in how to preserve what has already been earlier acquired. It is therefore not surprising that after Tacitus he 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.¹³ That 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 similarity, and seems to me to be misdirected.¹⁴ Botero remained relevant today because he is quite determined to find the *via media* between Machiavelli's new and the traditional, Aristotelian 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 idealist talk of politics, characteristic of the antique and Christian political theory of the earlier periods. Already at the beginning of his book he brings up important new issues, for example his preference for middle-size states. As he sees it, large states are prone to become subjects of envy, while small ones can easily become preys of the big ones' cruelty. But middle-size states have a moderate control over two of the most important goods

Italian one: *Della Ragione di Stato*, in Venetia, appresso I Gioliti, MDXCVIII.

https://ia600300.us.archive.org/13/items/dellaragionedist00boto/dellaragionedist00boto_bw.pdf

¹⁰ 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*), but also 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.

¹¹ English quotes are taken from the online English edition, see above. Italian terms are given from the online Italian edition, mentioned above.

¹² For the Botero-Tacitus connection, see Schellhase, 1992.

¹³ Botero refers to Aristotle's *Politics*, Book 2., 1274.

¹⁴ One of these interpreters is Peter Burke, in his above mentioned, influential book.

of states, namely wealth (*ricchezza*) and power in the positive sense of ability to act (*potenza*), and therefore the passions (*passioni*) and ambition (*ambitione*) turning against them are also less brutal, and can gain less support. This is an argument in favour of the golden mean, which tries to provide safeguards against the extremities of passions, and as such it is an obvious engagement with the Aristotelian tradition. It is not by chance either that his reference point – beyond Sparta and Carthage – is Venice, of which it was well known that the cause of its long term survival were these: that it was a midsize power, and that it could preserve stability (*più stabile*) together with power (*più fermo*). (Book 1., Chapter 6.) An important condition of such a long survival is that the ruler is reconciled with the fact that he governs a midsize state. The fact that he successfully preserved his power for a long time is a proof of the Venetians' virtues, including (beside 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 it was used by Machiavelli. It is also in accordance with the traditional Greco-Roman moral doctrine, that he regards external threat a less imminent danger than the atrophy of the inner moral sense. He seems to share the common 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 he means by the term 'war' 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 whether reputation or love (*riputazione 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 looks for leaders, who are excellent in courage and virtuosity (*eccellenza di valore e di virtù*) (16), and therefore can serve the common cause. On 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 his excellence, the ruler can distinguish himself among his compatriots, a conclusion that makes Botero's theory relevant for the justification of absolute rule, too. 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 back this assumption to ancient authors, including (beside Tacitus) once again Aristotle, who regarded those holding practical wisdom and good judgement 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 due 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, the preservation of the state, wisdom versus power, wealth and potentiality, stability, peace, reputation, natural ruling virtues, valour and prudence), than 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, touching upon that theme within the context of Tacitism, and shall not deal with the Bodin-Botero connection, either, as this topic requires still further investigations on my part.¹⁵

3. The rise of Tacitism in the 16th century

If we approach the influences which might be relevant for the thought of Botero from the perspective of the discourse of reason of state, the first one which comes to one's mind is Tacitism. István Borzsák quotes "the monographer of staatsräson", Meinecke, who famously claimed that idea of *ragione di stato* was not invented out of the blue, but can be traced back to the works of Tacitus.¹⁶ (Borzsák, 1994: 279-291, 283.) The term Tacitism does 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 such a dominant influence, and the name of the concrete author was only used here 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." (Borzsák, 1994: 281.) 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." (Borzsák, 1994: 290.)

It is well-known that Botero mentions in the recommendation of his book Tacitus – beside Machiavelli. Although seemingly he strongly criticises both, in fact he does not condemn

¹⁵ Bodin is adequately captured by the study of Bodroff, mentioned above. Unfortunately, I will not be able to describe the Guicciardini-Botero link, either, because this topic requires a special treatment, too.

¹⁶ Borzsák refers to Meinecke, 1957, 29. I dealt with Meinecke's *Idea* in Hörcher, 2007.

Tacitus, the person, but the hero of his historical narrative, emperor Tiber, who in his view has misused the reference to reason of state.¹⁷

If we try to assess his references in a systematic manner, we can find that Tacitus is one of the sources who return most often. Which is the more interesting if we recall that in his *De regia sapientia*, which has been finished only a few years earlier, in 1582-83, 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 the position to decide who is right in that debate. Momigliano thought that Botero could have met Carolus Paschalius on his travel to Paris, and this latter was an ardent supporter of the recovery of Tacitus.¹⁸ (Momigliano, 1947:91-101.) Schellhase, however, thought that they could have met in a number of ways, including the following options: that Botero accidentally heard Muret's lectures, sometimes between 1580-1582; that he could have come across Tacitus while in Paris he was reading Bodin; or that he read in Guicciardini or Lipsius of the parallels between the early modern rulers and Tiber. (Schellhase, 1976: 125, 126, 219-220.)

The important thing for us here of this fine, micro-historical debate is the claim that Botero's ideas of reason of state are not rooted in Machiavelli's thought which was by then strictly forbidden but from the Tacitism of the 1580s. And the relevance of this genealogy is that it makes it obvious that though Botero originally intended to criticise both of these traditions, he was much closer to the disillusioned picture of man as it was outlined in early modern Tacitism than to Machiavelli. And 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.

4. 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, became a very well-educated philologist-humanist, who published two volumes of interest for us: a moral philosophical piece on *De Constantia* (Lipsius, 1583/4), and a political piece entitled *Politica*. (Lipsius, 1589) The two ancient authors who had a lasting influence on him was Seneca and Tacitus. He published original text editions of Tacitus. But as he was not a historian himself, one can easily come to the conclusion that his interest in him was not motivated by the historian Tacitus, but more by the problem of political sobriety, which is one of the key issues of this author.

If we try to reconstruct the link between Lipsius and Botero, the first thing to ask is if they could have actually met. Some of the 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. (Tuck, 1993:61) But even more interestingly, Tuck suggests

¹⁷ The exact the 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 Schellhase, 1976.

¹⁸ Arnaldo 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. (Momigliano, 1990: 109-131; 124)

that Botero, too, could have heard about the activity of Lipsius, through his masters, the Borromeos, who were corresponding with Lipsius. (Tuck, 1993:66) 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 over the technique of attacking Tacitus and Machiavelli, and in the meantime tried to get a grip on their armour, and 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.¹⁹ This might be one of the reasons why we cannot easily pinpoint his position even today. His major work, written in the style of Seneca, (Lipsius, 1583/4) 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, who claims that together with Botero, Lipsius can be easily regarded as the founder of a specifically Catholic "Antimachiavellian" 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." (Bireley, 1990: 73)

Of course, above we have already pointed out that in Lipsius's 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 that idea of politics we talk about, which is part and parcel of court life not only in Renaissance Italy, but all around 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. (Castiglione, 1959., Peter Burke, 1995.) The same cover-strategies were followed by the authors of the theoretical literature of early modernity, as Leo Strauss kept stressing, which makes the debate about Botero's and Lipsius's exact philosophical positions even more difficult to terminate.

Brooke, for example, doubts the interpretation of Bireley, and claims that the Antimachiavellians' doctrines were much closer to Machiavelli, only concealed because of the alertness of the censorship authorities of the Vatican. Waszink detected that *Politica* was on the Index of the Vatican only for a short while, and when certain parts were cut out of it, it could immediately disappear from that infamous list. (Brooke, 2012: 18-20) The present paper is not entitled to take 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 how to describe their relationship to the Machiavellian challenge. This paper accepts as honest their claim that they wanted to get rid 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

¹⁹ 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* (1544Ö).

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, beside the practical standard of success. Papy found already in *De Constantia* 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 of princes, a popular genre among humanists, and Machiavelli's *Prince*". (Papy, 2011) 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.

5. 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-90s 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 (Farrell, 1970)

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, who learnt in Paris, got acquainted 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 on the elastic rhetorical ideas of the humanists and on the innovative theological views of the reformers, but also on the new political experiences that were being born as a result of the global discoveries over 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, however, talks about him as the representative of early modern global political philosophy, as well. (Thumfart, 2003:3-15)²⁰

Vitoria was influential within his own home university, on people like another Dominican, Domingo de Soto, and the Jesuit Francisco Suárez, themselves important authorities on 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 cared about the theological arguments, which he supplemented with historical analyses. (Bireley, 1999: 80-81.)

If we read Botero's arguments in this context, it appears in a different light than along the Lipsius-Machiavelli axis, or when we read him from the perspective of his relationship with Tacitus. From this point of view, what matters is not so much 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 on him of Salamanca-style Catholic teaching is obvious. Unfortunately, according to his sharpest critics, he saw this reconciliation too optimistically unproblematic, which might on the final account be labelled as a disregard of moral problems. This way, 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. These two aspects had a decisive role why Botero's work looked seminal in the 17th century. Let us therefore shortly touch upon them. 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 shortly 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* (Botero, 1588). The author's aims are not so 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. (Pounds, 1978: 28-29) He observes that to become great a town requires the adequate quality of the soil, and the 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 raise the glory of the town. In other cases, establishing a university turned out a decisive push for a city's growth.

²⁰ For an overall discussion of the theoretical backbones of the newly emerging global order of the period see Anthony Pagden, 1995. and Kelly, 2009.

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 fatal for its competitors, which they could not necessarily balance some other ways. Taking 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* (Botero, 1591-1696). 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.” (Cosgrove, 2003: 865) In the newly discovered global arena Europe defined its own task to keep 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 strife for world dominance is to be supported from his Northern Italian, Catholic, Jesuit perspective, too. He added to this in accordance with the Ciceronian, Humanist discourse, that the least developed peoples of the world, in order to be ready for „pacification”, also need 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 demands can give due honour to God, or in the non-Judeo-Christian tradition, gods. Botero's own programme of creating a global civilisation of high culture turns out to be, in the final account, a kind of this worldly theodicy. Naturally, as was pointed out earlier, the present paper cannot pay the necessary attention to these last two works of Botero, 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 the 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 who suggests that we should not analyse in a segmented manner Botero's oeuvre, but together, in their totality, at least as far as the

three major works are concerned.²¹ Descendre argues that by reading together the three books we will see how far Botero's work can indeed be regarded as a new, early modern renaissance of political realism.

6. 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, too. 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.²² The present paper, however, 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 (Viroli, 1992). 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 aimed 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 unlimited power of the 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*, and it resurfaces in Cicero's volumes on politics, and the way it was overtaken by Aquinas, in his Aristotle commentaries and in the relevant - moral-theological – parts of his *Summa*. If we take seriously enough the concept of *prudentia*, 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, but at least politically 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 the plebs can be prudent. After all, as we have seen, prudence played a crucial role in early modern ideas

²¹ „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.” (Romain Descendre, 2009:13)

²² 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 contribution of Tacitism is to be found.

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, 1637). 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 of the power holder only, but it is generally a condition of 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 in the second book of *Ragione di stato* practical wisdom. 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 the science of war and peace for the community. Both of them require – as usual – the help of rhetoric. In order to exercise social control, the renaissance and the baroque ruler requires a court. According to humanist ideals, Botero expects the ruler to be able to use the pen as well as the sword. His ruler controls the republic of letters, too. He is a strategic player in the battle of the books. He is a master of that science, which may directly help him 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 in the theatre of the past, the ruler can gain experience without risking or losing 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 ways 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 of human nature, too. Human nature is defined by education, age and individual life circumstances for him. 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 seaside peoples and peoples from the main land. 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.

The same way we can read short advisory gnomes here taken over from the traditional mirror for princes literature. These are samples to show: the author is aware of that genre as well, and he is able to take the traditional role of the adviser, too. In the summary of his life we have already pointed out that for some time he actually had the role of political adviser. His pieces of advice in this book concern, for example, the art of waging war, and focuses 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, adequate moment). (Hörcher, 2006b) The connection between the two concepts is this: practical wisdom can be grasped as undelayed action (action with a right timing). “Learn to recognise the critical moment (*conoscer l'occasioni dell'impresa*) in war and affairs and to seize opportunities as they appear (*abbraccia opportunamente*).” (46) In order to get it done, Botero requires the same as was required by Aristotle: designing the action should not take too long, but leave the option of improvising 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 again Tacitus is his source. As Botero sees it, whenever it is possible, the ruler should hear advice, before he acts. And in this respect advisers with practical experience (*pratica*) (51) are the better choice, because their advice is better tuned to the demands of the moments, while the theoretically minded advisers might be lost among real circumstances. With this idea Botero once again turns back to Aristotle (as opposed to Plato), when he compares the judgement (*giudicio*) of experienced men (*essercitati*) (70) to that of the learned. Experience favours things that have been tried, while change is always risky – he claims in subchapter 9. *On The Avoidance of Novelty (del non far nouità)*. 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, quoting Livius, 1853: XXXIV, 54., 8.)

Furthermore, the preservation of the power of the ruler depends on reputation, in other words on the evaluation (*riputazione*) 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 potentia (*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, 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 off 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 extremities (*estremi*), and he has to show maturity (*mature*) and moderation (*moderato*). (79) When this principle is accepted we can explain, why we need to overrate truth (*verità*) to suppositions (*opinione*) (80): truth is usually somewhere in between the extremities 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 a ground of justification to trespass divine legislation. On the contrary: the ruler's will has always to give priority to God's will. Religion provides in this sense the foundation of society – as in Cicero's political thought.

In other words in Botero's line of argument prudence is not a principle which can demolish or at least to push into the background the traditional, ancient-Christian doctrine of virtues. However, while it fits well into its scheme it borrows that doctrine a realist political tone, which helps the ruler (and in general the particular political agent) to 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 the 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 the 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 and yet 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 Macchiavelli's *The Prince* (1512, 1532).

7. 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 together 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 much before him, 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*, published in Paris, translated by Gabriel Chappuys. 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, by force if that was what was needed. (Church, 1972) 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.²³ 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. (Richelieu, 1680)

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 similar closure of the Napoleonic invasion as 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 proces, the Richelieu of the 19th century 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 a knowledge is once again proven by written text: by his *Memoires*: (Metternich, 1884)

„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.” (Metternich, 1884, I:30)

In other words, Metternich has already recognised, that what he needs to stabilise is not simply a country or an empire, but a whole global (or at least continental) order, a society of states. And though 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

²³ Poole, 2015: 98. refers to a conceptual distinction by Philip Bobbit, differentiating between an Italian and a French model, beside 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. (Bobbit, 2002)

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 initiated by him, including the horrors of World War I., his actual historical performance does not seem so glorious. And yet, the Versailles peace system, which closed down 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 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 Henry Kissinger. (Kissinger, 1957) Born in Germany into a Jewish family, he had to escape from Germany with his family in 1938 from the Hitler regime, the young academic kept searching for the right moment to cut in the formation of the foreign policy of his new 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. (Kaplan, 1999)

With this last link, which connects the would be American foreign secretary and his famous idol, the Cardinal of the 19th century European Holy Alliance we could indirectly hint at the connection between the Italian humanist, Giovanni Botero, who established the doctrine of reason of state, and the American foreign policy expert, and real politician, Henry Kissinger, who was himself blessed with a vast amount of historical and theoretical background knowledge. His academic and political success supports our initial thesis, that in order to make sense of the challenges of our day it is crucial to pay attention to the historical turn, which brought into contact the science of international relations with the history of political thought. To fully justify this thesis, however, requires another paper, as the topic stretches well beyond what can be expected in a paper on Botero and reason of state.

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