

## INTRODUCTION

### *The Limits of Self-Interest*

The Italian Renaissance was a period of cultural and artistic rebirth, a rediscovery of classical culture that brought epochal creativity to science, commerce, and the arts, with the city of Florence as a cradle of achievement. However, between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, Italy and Europe suffered periods of economic depression and societal chaos stemming not solely from cataclysms like the 1348 Black Death but also from continuous wars, religious turmoil, famine, and increasing authoritarian interference into political and economic life.<sup>1</sup> In this climate, the ascendant national monarchies in France, Spain, and England, and regional corollaries such as the Medici family of Florence, affirmed dominance over oligarchical and republican civic institutions.

Renowned intellectuals of the period wrote treatises, histories, letters, and poems rationalizing authoritarian rule and the consequent suppression of economic and political liberty. In political and social terms, these writers behaved as *establishment intellectuals*, harnessing their talents to further the power of hegemony, in this case of monarchical rule. Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) brilliantly decried the moral failings of his generation and resulting political strife in the *Divine Comedy*. However, Dante also championed the political cause of Holy Roman Emperor Henry VII of Luxembourg (1269/74–1313), penning *De monarchia* (*On Monarchy*), a treatise

1. Murray N. Rothbard, *An Austrian Perspective on the History of Economic Thought*, vol. 1, *Economic Thought Before Adam Smith* (Camberley, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 1995), 177–210.

providing intellectual cover for temporal rule over Italian communes and cities by a German Holy Roman emperor. Dante's political stance would have meant the descent of German troops into Italy, a contingency inhabitants of the peninsula have historically sought to avoid. Francesco Petrarca (1304–1374) penned a famous poem inciting Italian princes and republics to renew ancient Roman military policy, *My Italy* (*Canzoniere*, CXXVIII). However, he also wrote a fawning letter (*Senili*, XIV, 1) to Francesco da Carrara, overlord of Padua, on the duties of a prince in the tradition of humanists seeking patronage from local despots. Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) may have had a firm foundation in republican ideology and practice. However, once the Florentine Republic where he worked fell to a Medici coup supported by Spanish troops in 1512, he penned *The Prince* (1513), promoting himself to Florence's Medici rulers, advising them to mask ruthless extremism with piety to maintain power. Similarly, Baldassare Castiglione's (1478–1529) *The Book of the Courtier* (1528) advises individuals to strive for personal promotion as nonchalant gentlemen adept at currying favor with a ruling lord. These writers adapted to and wrote for the power establishment of their day, which was increasingly autocratic.

During the lifetime of Francesco Guicciardini (1483–1540), Florentine politics were dominated by the struggle of republican leaders to retain civic political autonomy against the ambitions of the Medici family. Competition for power between popular, aristocratic, and monarchical factions had characterized Florentine politics since the late Middle Ages but took an authoritarian turn with the rise of the Medici family from a financial to a political power. The Florentine Republic became a de facto Medici principality during and following the rule of the Medici clan patriarch, Cosimo de' Medici (1389–1464). The geopolitical context during Guicciardini's lifetime was the Italian Wars (1494–1559), when Italy was a battlefield in the contest for continental hegemony between the Habsburg monarchs of Spain and Austria and the Valois of France, beginning with the invasion by the French king Charles VIII (1470–1498) in 1494 and ending with the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559, when the French relinquished claims in Italy.

Guicciardini spent his professional life as representative, functionary, and apologist for the Medici clan, serving a long list of Medici lords over his career. He advised Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici (1492–1519) and Giuliano di Lorenzo de' Medici (1479–1516), the first Medici lords of Florence following the 1512 fall of the Florentine Republic and the subject of

Guicciardini's treatise "How to Ensure the State for the House of Medici." He was counsel to Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici (1475–1521), who ruled as Pope Leo X from 1513 to his death in 1521 and appointed Guicciardini governor of Romagna. Guicciardini was lieutenant general and advisor to Giulio di Giuliano de' Medici (1478–1534), who ruled as Pope Clement VII from 1523 to his death in 1534. Guicciardini aided the accession to the duchy of Alessandro de' Medici (1510–1537), the alleged illegitimate son of Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici (1492–1519) or the future Clement VII. Guicciardini encountered other Medici who opposed Alessandro's ascension to the duchy of Florence, such as Ippolito de' Medici (1509–1535) and Alessandro's eventual murderer, Lorenzino de' Medici (1514–1548), also known as Lorenzaccio. Guicciardini was eventually removed from the Medici administration by Cosimo I (1519–1574), who succeeded Alessandro.

Guicciardini's service to the Medici did not result in personal defeat, at least in venal terms. During and after Francesco Guicciardini's life, the Guicciardini family maintained and consolidated a position among Florence's elite. However, ultimately, Guicciardini put his considerable talents and energy to the service of a cause—the consolidation of Medici power—which served their interests more completely than his own. Guicciardini's efforts on behalf of the Medici clan resulted in the thwarting of the political aspirations both of his class and that of his fellow citizens, who lost their proud republican heritage and definitively succumbed to Medici rule.

After retiring from political office in 1537, Guicciardini tried to make sense of his experiences in the Italian Wars by composing the *History of Italy* (1538–40), recounting events from the death of Lorenzo de' Medici (the Magnificent) in 1492 to the death of Pope Clement VII in 1534, when Guicciardini's participation in papal administration and for the Medici attenuated. The compelling aspect of Guicciardini's *History of Italy* is that he lived and was intricately involved in the political and military decisions and events he recounts. Yet, Guicciardini's reputation in posterity remains as the main historian of early sixteenth-century Italy rather than as a participant. The documents herein present Guicciardini as a protagonist rather than as an historian.<sup>2</sup> Guicciardini opens his prolix *History of Italy*

2. The sources for the documents in the present collection are the following: Francesco Guicciardini, *Scritti autobiografici e rari*, ed. Roberto Palmarocchi (Bari: Laterza, 1936); Guicciardini, *Opere inedite di Francesco Guicciardini illustrate da Giuseppe Canestrini e pubblicate per cura dei conti Piero e Luigi Guicciardini: Del reggimento di Firenze libri due*.

with a rare metaphor describing the political affairs of Italy between 1492 (the death of Lorenzo de' Medici) and 1534 (the death of Clement VII) as a vessel tossed about the waters under uncontrollable winds. Guicciardini was describing Italy; however, considering his involvement in events and the results of his efforts, he may well have been describing himself.

In such an unpredictable and chaotic milieu, Guicciardini's approach was to anticipate contingencies and to act prudently, and the meter he chose to predict events was self-interest, with assessment contingent upon results. As he states in "On the Use of Force," "All the actions of men may be defined as good or bad according to their outcomes." In this vein, Guicciardini was not solely an historian but also a precursor of the dismal social science of economics, which attempts to reduce all human endeavors to quantifiable data. Included herein is Guicciardini's contribution to economic theory, namely, his analysis in "On Progressive Taxation" of the "scaled tenth" taxation policy of the Florentine Republic, which analyzes the effects of progressive tax rates on individual behavior.

In the C28 redaction of the *Ricordi/Maxims*, Guicciardini confesses with a sense of shame that his personal self-interest, his *particulare*, drove him to serve the Medici popes, Leo X and Clement VII, despite misgivings about the corruption of the papacy.<sup>3</sup> A reading of this *ricordo* by literary historian and educational reformer Francesco De Sanctis established the *particulare* as the epithet determining Guicciardini's critical reputation in the modern period. De Sanctis wrote during the nationalist moment of the Italian national unification of the *Risorgimento* (Resurgence) during

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*Discorsi intorno alle mutazioni e riforme del governo fiorentino* (Florence: Barbèra, Bianchi, 1858); Guicciardini, *Dialogo e discorsi del reggimento di Firenze*, ed. Roberto Palmarocchi (Bari: Laterza, 1932); Guicciardini, *Scritti politici e ricordi*, ed. Roberto Palmarocchi (Bari: Laterza, 1933); Guicciardini, *Carteggi di Francesco Guicciardini*, ed. Pier Giorgio Ricci and Roberto Palmarocchi (Milan: Istituto per gli studi di politica internazionale; Istituto storico italiano per l'età moderna e contemporanea, 1943-).

3. *Ricordo* C28. "I know of no one who loathes the ambition, the avarice, and the sensuality of the clergy more than I—both because each of these vices is hateful in itself and because each and all are hardly suited to those who profess to live a life dependent upon God. Furthermore, they are such contradictory vices that they cannot coexist in a subject unless he be very unusual indeed.

"In spite of all this, the positions I have held under several popes have forced me, for my own good, to further their interests. Were it not for that, I should have loved Martin Luther as much as myself—not so that I might be free of the laws based on Christian religion as it is generally interpreted and understood; but to see this bunch of rascals get their just deserts, that is, to be either without vices or without authority." Francesco Guicciardini, *Maxims and Reflections of a Renaissance Statesman (Ricordi)*, trans. Mario Domandi (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), 48.

the nineteenth century. For De Sanctis, Guicciardini's *particolare*, his personal self-interest, explained why Italy came to suffer and even deserve foreign domination in the sixteenth century, and why Guicciardini's legacy posed a threat to the ethical fiber of a newly united Italy in the 1860s.<sup>4</sup> For De Sanctis, the lesson from Guicciardini is how working for a corrupt system may benefit personal short-term interest but have long-term consequences negative to oneself and society.

Guicciardini's service to an undeniably corrupt papacy and the personal advantages he gained from service to the Medici clan, which ruled both Florence and the Papal States under Leo X and Clement VII, would seem to confirm De Sanctis's negative characterization. A lesson from Guicciardini's life and writings is the realization that working within a corrupt system does not lead to solutions. Guicciardini's personal philosophy was not limited to the evaluation of his own self-interest alone but also applied the self-interests of others as a meter to judge people and events and to forge a prudent course of action. The advantage to Guicciardini's approach championing individual self-interest above other considerations, whether ideological, religious, or emotional, is the lure of simplification of analysis and the pretense of purporting to provide advice for the anticipation of future events. If all factors may be reduced to self-interest, then other factors are either superfluous or contingent and therefore do not require consideration. The disadvantage, and the cause for frustration and personal defeat for Guicciardini, is that such rationality may be logically coherent but does not account for the frailty, capriciousness, and emotional charge in human behavior, as the course of Guicciardini's own life attests. Guicciardini did attempt to include extrarational influences in his histories and in some of the writings included herein, such as the "Accusation," "Consolation," and "Defense" orations,

4. See Francesco De Sanctis, "L'uomo del Guicciardini," *Nuova antologia* (Oct. 1869), in L. Russo, *Saggi critici* (Bari: Laterza, 1952). For details regarding the influence of De Sanctis's reading, see Vincent Luciani, *Francesco Guicciardini and His European Reputation* (New York: Karl Otto, 1936); Mark Phillips, "Reappraising 'Guicciardinian Man': Changing Contexts of Judgment on Guicciardini Since De Sanctis," *Rivista di studi Italiani* 1, no. 2 (1983): 1329; Roberto Ridolfi, "Su un famoso saggio di De Sanctis: 'L'uomo del Guicciardini,'" *Nuova antologia* 86 (1961): 3544; Gennaro Sasso, "Guicciardini e Machiavelli," in *Francesco Guicciardini, 1483–1983: Nel V centenario della nascita* (Florence: Olschki, 1984); Sasso, "I volti del particolare," in *Francesco Guicciardini: Giornata lincea indetta in occasione del V centenario della nascita* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1985); Sasso, *Per Francesco Guicciardini: Quattro studi* (Roma: Gestisa, 1984); Sasso, "Postilla guicciardiniana: I problemi del particolare," in *Studi in onore di Pietro Silva* (Florence: LeMonnier, 1957), 284–303.

the note “To Himself,” and the “Savonarolian Excerpts.” However, Guicciardini never fully incorporated these extrarational considerations into his conduct, nor into the advice he offered his Medici masters. Guicciardini spent his career calculating, but also miscalculating, his self-interest, as well as the self-interests of the Medici overlords he served, the leaders of Italian city-states, the republican populists and frustrated aristocracy in Florence, and the kings of the consolidated European monarchies whose armies rampaged across the peninsula during the Italian Wars.

The lesson from Guicciardini’s experiences is not just a De Sanctian disdain for self-serving ambition, but also the realization that reason and rationality are not the ruling factors deciding and predicting human behavior. Guicciardini reminds one of contemporary economists whose record of predicting changes in economic conditions is far from reliable and whose reduction of behavior to quantifiable data may provide not so much a guide for deciding a course of action as much as a manner to justify faulty decisions after the fact. In short, economic analysis as a tool in policy decision may be more useful for a posteriori justification than future planning. Guicciardini was therefore arguably one of the first political counselors who was also an economist. If there is a Guicciardinian moment, it is the transition in public-policy analysis in line with the expansion of knowledge during the Renaissance, when economists and economic analysis replaced astrology and traditional soothsayers.

Guicciardini displayed an ambitious character precociously. In his “Accusation,” he reveals how his schoolmates nicknamed him Alcibiades, after the notorious Athenian general, betrayer of his country.<sup>5</sup> When his uncle Rinieri, archdeacon of Florence and bishop of Cortona, died, Guicciardini considered pursuing an ecclesiastical career but was dissuaded by his father, who had been sympathetic to Savonarolian invective against the corruption of the church. Had Guicciardini undertaken an ecclesiastical career, one can almost envision him as a predecessor of *éminences grises* like Cardinals Richelieu or Mazarin, who were key figures in the regimes of French kings Louis XIII and XIV.

Instead, Francesco decided to become a lawyer, attending university in Florence, Ferrara, and Padua.<sup>6</sup> He gained an education in the humanist

5. Alcibiades (450–404 BC).

6. See Paul Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

manner, with study of classical rhetoric and a solid command of Latin, although not Greek. He earned a degree in civil law in 1505 and established a practice in Florence. He married Maria di Alamanno di Averardo Salviati, despite the reservations of his father, who had hoped for a marriage into a less politically exposed family. Guicciardini's future father-in-law, Alamanno Salviati, was an influential figure with family ties to the Medici clan, an indication of Guicciardini's future political leanings.<sup>7</sup>

Guicciardini's career enjoyed auspicious beginnings, aided by the influence of his father-in-law. Despite his youth, Guicciardini received prestigious offers to serve the Florentine Republic, including a diplomatic charge at the reacquisition of Lucca. In 1511, he accepted the ambassadorship to the court of King Ferdinand II (1452–1516) of Aragon-Castile after initial reservations about leaving his legal practice. His father insisted that he could not decline such an honor, and Guicciardini left for Spain early in 1512, beginning a brilliant and lucrative career in government service, first for the Florentine Republic and subsequently for the Medici in Florence and the two Medici popes, Leo X and Clement VII, in the Papal States.

During his ambassadorship to the court of Aragon-Castile, Guicciardini penned a terse note entitled "To Himself," which has a self-loathing tone about his unworthiness to be the recipient of honors at such an early age. At thirty, Guicciardini had yet to reach the influence that would make him one of the top power brokers in early sixteenth-century Italy. In "To Himself," Guicciardini laments the flaws in his character with a tone of religious shame about his willingness to work for a corrupt system for personal gain. Guicciardini's concern about worldly ambition echoes the current of millenarian religious fundamentalism prevalent in Europe during the early modern period. Political suppression under authoritarianism provoked popular reactions in the form of religiously inspired revolts, some including elements of communistic messianism, with a history of murderous consequences in crusades against the Dolcinites and Walensians, the Cathars, the Anabaptists, and civil strife between Catholics and Lutherans. Yet, this self-awareness would not suffice to drive Guicciardini to become a beacon of one of the religious, political, or ideological currents that were alternatives to the increasingly autocratic political and social climate of the period.

7. Roberto Ridolfi, *Life of Francesco Guicciardini* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968).



FIG. 1 | Portraits (clockwise) of Girolamo Savonarola; Pope Julius II; Charles VIII, king of France; and Giulio di Giuliano de' Medici, who ruled as Pope Clement VII. Photo: Wikimedia Commons / The Illusional Ministry.

In 1490s Florence, a populist, millennialist wave brought the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498) to the center of city affairs. Savonarola's fundamentalist message, delivered in fiery sermons, with processions for mass penance and the burning of artwork and books at “bonfires of the vanities,” dominated Florentine political life from 1494 until the friar's excommunication, trial, and execution in 1498. When Savonarola rose to influence, Florence was one of the richest cities in the world, enjoying a wave of artistic, scientific, economic, and cultural awakening. The Medici astutely channeled wealth into works to elevate their prestige by inspiring public awe and consolidating power in accordance with subsequent political theory from Machiavelli's *The Prince*. However, Savonarola rejected the fruits of Florence's burgeoning economy and materialist culture for a fundamentalist recursion to austerity, fasting, and disdain for luxury and art. His sermons and acts, such as his reticence to grant Lorenzo de' Medici deathbed absolution in 1492, influenced and even determined Florentine governmental policy, leading to the expulsion of Piero de' Medici in 1494. Savonarola's political prestige was enhanced when he reportedly dissuaded the French king,



FIG. 2 | Giuliano Bugiardini, portrait of Francesco Guicciardini, ca. 1538–40. Yale University Art Gallery. Gift of Hannah D. and Louis M. Rabinowitz, accepted by deed of gift, April 29, 1959. Photo: Yale University Art Gallery.



Charles VIII, encamped outside Florence with his invading army, from sacking Florence.

Guicciardini grew up under the shadow of Savonarolian fundamentalism and prophecy that a divine scourge would punish Italy and her corrupt rulers. In 1498, the year of Savonarola's excommunication, trial, and execution, Guicciardini would turn fifteen years of age and must have felt the reverberations of the political turmoil Savonarolian fundamentalism inspired in Florence's citizenry. Savonarolian religious fundamentalism would remain as an influence for Guicciardini, who at the end of "How to Ensure the State to the House of the Medici" admonishes citizens for their lavish lifestyles and dress in accordance with Savonarola's call for sobriety and austerity. Yet, Savonarolian fundamentalism and prophecy would be precisely the sort of unworldly impulse that found little space in Guicciardini's philosophy, which perceived material self-interest as the definitive key to reality. However, at a personal level Guicciardini did retain a fascination for otherworldly predictions. The publication of Guicciardini's horoscope reveals how, perhaps in his closet council,

Guicciardini was very much prone to the superstitions of his day.<sup>8</sup> He subsequently collected excerpts from the sermons of Savonarola, the “Savonarolian Excerpts,” which he scoured for evidence that the Italian Wars beginning in the late fifteenth century had been the fulfillment of the friar’s prediction of a divine scourge punishing the immorality of Italy’s people and her rulers.

As ambassador to the court of King Ferdinand II in 1512, Guicciardini observed the intrigues of a Castilian-Aragonese court that had consolidated power by expelling the Moors from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492, was pursuing interests across Europe, and was receiving fresh dispatches from conquests in the Americas. The astute machinations of King Ferdinand II provided Guicciardini with a political schooling comparable with Machiavelli’s experience with Cesare Borgia as recounted in *The Prince*.

The Piero Soderini–led Florentine Republic fell in 1512 to a Medici coup when Spanish troops savagely sacked Prato and routed the republican militia purportedly organized by Machiavelli. Guicciardini’s ambassadorship to the court of Spain just before Spanish troops reinstated the Medici regime raised suspicions among republicans, particularly after Guicciardini received posts in the postrepublican Medici regime. When Medici fortunes fell following the 1527 Sack of Rome, Florentine republicans would bitterly recall the coincidence, with repercussions for Guicciardini. To date, there is no absolute confirmation that Guicciardini was privy to information regarding Ferdinand’s plans to support a Medici coup. However, if Guicciardini had been unable to discover and warn the Florentine Republic that Ferdinand had planned to supply the troops for a Medici coup, then he failed his mission as ambassador, which was to gather information and apprise his superiors in Florence of Ferdinand’s intentions. Perhaps Guicciardini’s seeming unawareness of Spanish plans to support a Medici coup is proof of Ferdinand’s ability and guile rather than collusion on Guicciardini’s part. Or perhaps Guicciardini’s failure to provide a warning of a Medici coup could be an early indication of the flaws in his philosophy, whereby he was unable to calculate the self-interest and motivations of all players including himself, a failing that would repeat in subsequent episodes of Guicciardini’s career.

8. Raffaella Castagnola, *Guicciardini e le scienze occulte: L’oroscopo di Francesco Guicciardini: Lettere di alchimia, astrologia e cabala a Luigi Guicciardini* (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1990).

During his Spanish ambassadorship, Guicciardini composed a “Report on Spain” that offers acute analyses of Spanish history, culture, and the court politics of King Ferdinand II. After opening with an unflattering characterization of the Hispanic character, Guicciardini’s “Report on Spain” delves into explanations of the Hispanic attitudes regarding commerce and industry that would eventually mark the nation’s economic decline. Guicciardini also offers insights on Spanish military strategy, religious practice, history, geography, law, architecture, court politics, and social structure. Guicciardini wrote his “Report on Spain” when Ferdinand II’s Castilian-Aragonese regime was on the cusp of global empire and the Spanish court was a flurry of intrigue and expansion. He offers a picture of a country and a wily ruler, Ferdinand II, a master of discretion who was to be respected and feared.

The breadth of Guicciardini’s report raises suspicions that he would have been unable to learn of the plans of the monarch to support a Medici restoration in 1512. The concluding section of the report is a detailed analysis of Ferdinand’s finances, with the insight that without papal concessions, the Spanish regime would risk insolvency and become unable to project power beyond its borders. Guicciardini’s detailed analysis supported by precise projections of the Spanish regime’s budget indicates a capacity to gather information about Ferdinand’s regime at a very high level. Guicciardini’s seeming competence to complete the charge expected of an ambassador raises doubts that he would be unaware of the Spanish court’s plans to support a Medici coup in Florence. Guicciardini’s “Report on Spain” and the expertise and experience he gained therefrom made him an attractive candidate for subsequent papal administrations, for whom Spain was a continuing concern. Spanish intervention in Italian affairs escalated after the restoration of the Medici regime in 1512 with the support of Spanish troops. Spain would claim hegemony in Italian affairs after the Sack of Rome in 1527 and the ensuing Siege of Florence, when most of Italy came under Spanish domination as proxy states to a global Spanish empire ruled by Ferdinand II’s successor, Charles V (1500–1558). The thrust of Spanish imperialism into Italian affairs and the eventual defeat of France had been the continuing challenge for the principal Italian city-states of Milan, Venice, Florence, the Papal States, and Naples, offering a geopolitical parallel to the declining political influence of Guicciardini’s peers in the optimate class in Florentine civic politics.

In 1513, Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici became Pope Leo X, succeeding Julius II and expanding Medici power in central Italy from dominion over Tuscany to include the Papal States' control of Romagna and Lazio. Upon returning to Florence from Spain, Guicciardini penned "How to Ensure the State to the House of the Medici." The treatise is an analysis of the factional interests in Florentine politics after the Medici restoration. Guicciardini discusses the interests of the vestiges of the overthrown republic and Guicciardini's own class, the optimate nobility, which aspired to retain at least a semblance of republican institutions under the authoritarian tendencies of the Medici overlords Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici (1492–1519) and Giuliano di Lorenzo de' Medici (1479–1516), de facto rulers of postrepublican Florence. As always, Guicciardini hoped his optimate class would enjoy an advisory role to temper both the popular and the monarchical factions in city politics.

In the treatise, Guicciardini ably analyzes the self-interests of all parties. He does so with a cynical and world-weary realization of the contingencies and caprices of each, pointing out how all are "influenced above all by their personal interest, as the guide that drives all men." Guicciardini reveals how the Medici partisans who had remained loyal during the Medici exile of 1494–1512 were initially unenthusiastic at the prospects of the return of the Medici. After their reduced fortunes during the Medici exile, these Medici supporters would have to put extra effort and resources to support a Medici restoration. Guicciardini offers another insight whereby those who initially supported the return of the Medici were the least reliable of Florence's citizens. After having been at odds with the republic, they were soon to be at odds with the Medici.

These subtle analyses of self-interests characterize Guicciardini's worldview and personal philosophy, which concentrates on material self-interest but devalues unpredictable impulses in human behavior. Guicciardini admits that irrational factors may also have an influence, writing, "I do not deny that certain natural inclinations toward hatred or love may prevail." However, his inability or unwillingness to accept or to discern these unpredictable factors in human nature would be the Achilles' heel in both his professional life and philosophy. Guicciardini concludes the treatise with a stern warning against the Medici assuming authoritarian rule and not properly recognizing Florence's republican traditions, a position he would abandon at the end of his career.

In 1516, the leader of the Medici clan, Pope Leo X, appointed Guicciardini papal governor of Modena, with responsibilities eventually extending to Parma and Reggio and the entire Romagna region under papal control. Guicciardini reportedly handled his appointment as governor with competence in a time of general ineptitude and corruption among rulers and governors, leading to an extended career in papal service until 1534. Guicciardini composed treatises on government in this period, promoting the Venetian model of an oligarchical republic, always searching for a solution to the dilemma of how to reconcile the tradition of republican rule and oligarchical reticence to the reality of Medici authoritarianism.<sup>9</sup>

“On Force” is a pro-and-contra study on the moral implications of state-sanctioned violence enforcing policy goals. The piece examines the reasons for and against government recursion to violence, with the added relevance that Guicciardini would have the political means and influence as governor of the Papal States to consider such topics not as mere intellectual exercises. Playing devil’s advocate, Guicciardini cites Lycurgus, the founding father of Spartan totalitarianism and one of Guicciardini’s favorite historical examples, as a model for how severity applied and accepted may achieve authoritarian goals. Yet, Guicciardini warns against allowing a single individual to monopolize public force. This conclusion contrasts with the course of Guicciardini’s later career as an adviser, governor, and advocate for the Medici clan in Florence and the Papal States.

In “On Suicide,” the conclusion regarding the propriety of committing suicide devolves to a question not so much of otherworldly consequences according to Christian teaching but of character and class in a classical vein. Guicciardini identifies with classical examples of suicides for political reasons out of an understanding of the affront to station and living standards that can result from political defeat to a populist faction. “On Force” had revealed aspects of Guicciardini’s mindset as a decision maker forced to resort to public violence to obtain policy goals. “On Suicide” examines the question of oppression from the point of view of defeated aristocrats forced to submit to popular uprisings, revealing prejudices against representative republican government as a window

9. Francesco Guicciardini, *Dialogue on the Government of Florence*, ed. and trans. Alison Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

into Guicciardini's mindset, where dignity, pride, and class identity have greater value than life itself. "On Suicide" also serves as a materialist response to the self-loathing tone expressed in "To Himself," where Guicciardini considered the toll of personal ambition on one's soul. The underlying question in "On Suicide" is whether self-interest is served by spiritual or class values. In his career, Guicciardini would opt for the latter, although his more personal writings and even his *History of Italy* would list doubts about the consequences of the former.

Guicciardini's "On Progressive Taxation: The Scaled Tenth" is one of the first treatises to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of progressive taxation.<sup>10</sup> Guicciardini ably delineates the primary and most forceful arguments supporting each opposing position. He offers the principal point in favor of progressive taxation: that the percentage of income spent on inelastic goods, the necessities of life without which one cannot survive, is greater for those with lower incomes. Therefore, to tax the poor at the same rate as the wealthy is unjust. However, Guicciardini also offers the main argument against a scaled tenth, progressive tax. If a government representing a constituent majority realizes that the law may be a tool to redistribute wealth, then the consequences may hamper economic activity and encourage the flight or rebellion of capable or wealthy citizens, in effect impoverishing the collectivity and harming everyone.

In 1521, Guicciardini served as commissioner general in Leo X's papal army allied with Charles V of Spain against Francis I of France. Just as papal fortunes improved in the war against the French, Leo X died suddenly, leaving Guicciardini commander of the besieged city of Parma and unable to receive orders until the election of a new pontiff. Despite this predicament, Guicciardini saved Parma from a French siege as described in the "Report on the Defense of Parma." The episode reveals the tenuous reality of events in the Italian Wars, where alliances were constantly shifting and rumor or ill humor among a citizenry or mercenaries could determine the outcome of a military clash. Many of Guicciardini's adversaries in the Parma defense would become allies in the later war against Charles V. Guicciardini's analysis of the perception and misperception of the self-interests of all the players in the events at Parma demonstrates

10. The work has received attention in the field of economics. See Nikola Regent, "Guicciardini's *La Decima scalata*: The First Treatise, 'The Scaled Tenth,'" *History of Political Economy* 46, no. 2 (2014): 307–31.

his political acumen, but also the level of confusion and chaos that was a staple in Guicciardini's professional life.

At Parma, Guicciardini turned the expectation of a quick rout of a defenseless city by the French into a victory for papal forces. He adeptly discerned and channeled the moods of the pusillanimous citizens and reticent mercenary troops within the city walls and correctly interpreted the hasty moves of his adversaries in the French camp with a cunning breadth of guile for negotiation and action. Guicciardini understood that he had no firm allies or support on either side and that his only possibility for success was to act according to his anticipation of the self-interests of both the French at the gates and the vacillating citizens and mercenaries within the walls of Parma. Guicciardini's defeat of the French assailants ensured his personal goal, which was to avoid his own capture and ransom. The success of his experience at Parma would seem to offer an example confirming Guicciardini's personal philosophy of the primacy of self-interest as the guide to interpret reality and set a course for action. In the defense of Parma, he had apparently correctly read and analyzed the motives of all parties for a favorable result. However, a reading of his account of events reveals that the determining factors in his victory were the unpredictable emotional reactions of all the parties rather than rational calculations of self-interest. Each faction miscalculated their self-interests and thereby allowed Guicciardini to direct events to his own advantage owing to a combination of guile and good fortune. Guicciardini recounts how a Parma town council meeting on the verge of voting to surrender was interrupted by a French artillery barrage that sent all hands rushing to man the city walls.

In 1523, Cardinal Giulio di Giuliano de' Medici assumed the pontificate as Clement VII, succeeding Leo X's short-lived, Dutch successor, Hadrian VI. The newly elected pontiff renewed Guicciardini's appointment as president of the Romagna region. A turning point of the Italian Wars between the French and Spanish came with the Spanish victory at the Battle of Pavia in 1525, which resulted in the imprisonment of the French king, Francis I, in the remote tower at Pizzighettone in the Po Valley.

Political alliances in this period of Italian political alliances were frustratingly variable, recalling the opening metaphor of Guicciardini's *History of Italy* of the nation as a ship driven by unpredictable winds. Guicciardini would later regret not advising Clement VII to turn to the French side sooner, realizing that the victory of Charles V's Hispanic imperial

troops at the Battle of Pavia posed the greater threat to Medici interests. Guicciardini subsequently advised Clement VII to form an anti-imperial Holy League in an alliance with Spain's potential rivals Venice, France, and England. As the Holy League army's lieutenant general, Guicciardini advocated attack on Milan in order to drive imperial forces from Italy.

Guicciardini levels much of the blame for the Holy League's defeat in the *History of Italy* (1540) on Francesco Maria della Rovere (1490–1538), commander of Venetian forces. In 1516, della Rovere had been displaced as lord of Pesaro by the Medici pope, Leo X. Della Rovere fought an unsuccessful war against the Medici to regain Urbino the following year, as Guicciardini recounts in chapter 13 of the *History of Italy*. Della Rovere would regain a duchy in the Marche in Urbino only after the death of Clement VII. Thus, della Rovere's inaction against forces threatening Clement VII is understandable, as his interests were in direct contrast to those of the Medici clan.

Della Rovere's Venetian troops finally attacked Milan, however, without blocking the troops of Charles V from descending into Italy. The mercenary soldiers at the service of the Spanish Empire included the infamous *Landsknechts* (soldiers of the land), fresh from the murderous Peasant Wars of 1525 between Catholic and Protestant principalities in Germany. The *Landsknechts* descended on the Italian peninsula with the fervor of religious conviction as if in fulfillment of Savonarola's dire prophecies about divine retribution for the corruption of the church and Italy's rulers.

In November 1526, the papal army's most feared and capable military leader, Ludovico de' Medici (1498–1526), also known as Giovanni dalle Bande Nere (John of the Black Bands), fell to one of the new firearms changing battlefield tactics. After his death, the mercenary troops he commanded, the Black Bands, became almost ungovernable. As lieutenant general of the Holy League army, Guicciardini faced a situation where the unpredictable influence of an individual personality had determined events, negating any further possibility for redress by calculation of the interests of the players involved.

On May 6, Charles V's imperial army invaded Rome, sacking the city with a fury beyond expectation. Again, the commander of the Venetian army, Francesco Maria della Rovere, perhaps a bit unnerved by the lesson in modern warfare and the power of firearms the French suffered at the Battle of Pavia, did not actively engage his forces. However, Della Rovere was also careful to cure his own personal interests, which as above did not



necessarily align with those of the Medici pope, Clement VII. A decline in Medici fortunes could allow an opportunity for the della Rovere clan to reassume control of cities in central Italy such as Urbino and Pesaro.

Guicciardini wrote a stiff letter to della Rovere on May 10, 1527, a few days after Spanish imperial troops breached Rome's defenses and Clement VIII took refuge in the Castel Sant'Angelo on the banks of the Tiber. In the letter, della Rovere's actions, or inactions, are described in the third person; perhaps Guicciardini penned the letter to explain and document his own actions rather than out of any hope to spur della Rovere and his troops into battle. The letter describes the predicament of papal forces and essentially accuses della Rovere of indifference to the plight of the besieged pontiff. Guicciardini could offer no argument to spur della Rovere beyond a perfunctory exhortation to remain loyal to the leader of Christendom. Again, the terse realization that della Rovere's personal interests would not be served by defending the pope offers the best explanation for his inaction.

Contemporaries referred to the military, political, cultural, and psychological blow felt in the Italian Peninsula after the 1527 Sack of Rome. Serving the authoritarian lords who had suppressed Italy's tradition of republican rule, many notable figures of the time were directly involved in the tragedy: Baldassare Castiglione was the papal ambassador to Charles V's court in Madrid; Benvenuto Cellini was among those besieged with Clement VII in Castel Sant'Angelo; Machiavelli was in Rome as advisor to the pope; and Guicciardini was the lieutenant general of the Holy League's routed, mercenary troops.

Following the Sack of Rome in 1527, Guicciardini fled to his villa near Florence at Finocchietto while a plague raged in the region, possibly spread by the retreating Holy League troops Guicciardini had hoped to lead as lieutenant general of the Holy League against Charles V. In their retreat from Lazio, these marauding mercenaries would also be accused of pillaging the Florentine countryside and holding inhabitants for ransom.

Reliance on mercenary troops, heavily criticized by Machiavelli in *The Prince*, is tangential to Guicciardini's philosophy of adopting self-interest rather than emotional and irrational motives as a meter to interpret reality. The papal troops who had fought for pay, or had been loyal to a fallen leader (Giovanni dalle Bande Nere), or had found themselves under a reticent commander such as Francesco Maria della Rovere, proved to be useless. In comparison, elements of the imperial

*Landsknechts* were motivated by their interest to collect booty as well as Lutheran propaganda, precisely the sort of irrational and unpredictable factor not a party to Guicciardini's philosophy.

With the pope negotiating a ransom with the Spanish imperials, the Medici regime in Florence fell, and republicans installed a final Florentine republic expelling Medici supporters. The republican government in Florence felt the ideological influence of the Savonarolian-influenced republic of 1494–98. The Sack of Rome and the pestilence raging in the Florentine countryside seemed to be a fulfillment of threats of divine retribution from Savonarolian prophecy.

Safe in his villa in the Florentine countryside in 1527, Guicciardini composed the orations "Consolation," "Accusation," and "Defense."<sup>11</sup> These orations treat Guicciardini's personal drama in the classical *in utramque partem* (in both directions) format, with declarations of opposing points of view. An examination of events from opposite points of view forces consideration not only from a perspective one may prefer, but also from an opposite vantage point. Guicciardini approaches the exercise by framing the topic according to the imagined authors' first-person perceptions. In the "Consolation," Guicciardini assumes the voice of a friend who tries to convince the disgraced former lieutenant general of papal forces to accept the changes in his position and reputation after the Sack of Rome. In the "Accusation," Guicciardini assumes the voice of a vengeful prosecutor trying Guicciardini before the *Quarantia* (Forty), a judicial body that during the last Florentine republic purged the city of Medici supporters. In the final oration, the "Defense," Guicciardini completes the rhetorical exercise by defending himself from the prosecutor's charges in the "Accusation." As Guicciardini had anticipated, the Florentine Republic did level charges against him when he was advising Clement VII and Charles V in their siege of the city, the last stand of Florentine republican government before the establishment of a Medici duchy.

The *in utramque partem* format is common in the histories of classical authors, such as Thucydides's *History of the Peloponnesian War* or Livy's *History of Rome*, and it is a feature of Guicciardini's *History of Italy* (1540), which recounts events of the Italian Wars from multiple perspectives. There is the viewpoint of factions within Italian city-states split

11. Roberto Ridolfi has definitively corrected the idea that Guicciardini wrote the orations in 1530. See Ridolfi, *Life of Francesco Guicciardini*.

between those favoring wide participation in government and those, like Guicciardini, who favored oligarchical restriction by wealth or lineage according to the Venetian republican model. There are the Italian elite like the Medici seeking to establish hereditary duchies in these same city-states. There is also the wider continental perspective of the consolidated monarchies of France and Spain competing for hegemony in the Italian Peninsula and continental Europe. Guicciardini's history also has an eschatological undercurrent whereby the wars and pestilence that scourged Italy were divine retribution for the corruption of Italian princes. In this view, events unfolded in fulfillment of the prophecies of fundamentalist friar Girolamo Savonarola, who briefly influenced a theocratically conditioned Florentine Republic after the expulsion of the Medici in 1494 until his excommunication by the Borgia pope, Alexander VI (1431–1503), and trial and execution in Florence in 1498. Through the "Consolation," "Accusation," and "Defense," Guicciardini began to reconsider the events that had led to the Sack of Rome as part of a larger process of the Italian Wars that began in 1494 with the invasion of the French king Charles VIII.

The opening paragraph of the "Consolation" reveals just what is bothering Guicciardini. Because of the failure of the Holy League against Charles V and the Sack of Rome, he lost his position as the president of the Romagna region in the Papal States, which gave him "considerable benefits and prestige that would have honored any great man born to a station above that of a commoner." Guicciardini vaunts that he enjoyed so much authority that the pope "reserved nothing higher even for himself." Guicciardini's fall from grace was not just economic, but social. As the father of several daughters, he would have to provide dowries for their marriages or annuities for them to enter nunneries in accordance with their station. Without the prestige of his position as governor of Romagna, Guicciardini's offspring would have to marry within the Florentine or Tuscan nobility rather than aspire to higher positions among the Italian and even European elite.

The friend Guicciardini imagines as the author of the "Consolation" reminds him that the reason for the fall of Clement VII was the advice to pursue a war against the Spaniards. To counter the gloomy realization of the consequences of this advice, Guicciardini's imaginary friend offers philosophical and religious arguments that encourage a look beyond the vanities of the world to the eternal good of the soul, themes Guicciardini treated in

his early note, “To Himself.” However, Guicciardini’s friend quickly abandons this approach as appropriate only for the innocent at heart and not for someone as worldly as Guicciardini. If Guicciardini is to be consoled, the friend realizes that arguments must be “in accordance with the nature of men and the ways of the world.” Guicciardini’s meter remains worldly and materialistic, even in a defeat as massive as the aftermath of the Sack of Rome. To this end, the friend reminds Guicciardini that the favors he enjoyed at the papal court were temporary and unstable, dependent on the whims of a prince rather than anything lasting. Guicciardini should feel some shame and discomfort at the reduced station of the pope, but not more than normal “compassion for someone else’s suffering.”

With the loss of position in the papal administration, the friend insists that what afflicts Guicciardini is the damage to his reputation and the specter of a dishonorable, forced retirement. Guicciardini’s friend assures him that his honor is intact since he was one of the few members of the papal court to behave competently in the war against the Spanish imperials. Honor in Renaissance society was not just a relic of chivalric culture but also a public good whose value could lead to political advantage and favorable marriages for offspring.

The friend compares Guicciardini’s predicament to those of august figures of the past, affording an idea of the level of Guicciardini’s aspirations. Guicciardini is compared to the Roman emperor Diocletian, who retired to a life of leisure after the trials of service. For Guicciardini, damnation is not spiritual but public and material. The apex for a reputation—“to be godly,” in Guicciardini’s words—is public admiration in the manner of the ancient Athenian statesman Pericles. The importance of honor, of recovering a good name, takes precedence over questions of guilt, innocence, even life and death. To be godly means to be revered by your fellow men.<sup>12</sup>

Guicciardini’s imagined friend describes the state of his reputation with meteorological metaphors: “it is normal for rare and excellent men

12. *Ricordo* C16. “Power and position are generally sought, because everything that is beautiful and good about them appears externally, emblazoned on their superfcies. But the bother, the toil, the troubles, and the dangers lie hidden and unseen. If these were as obvious as the good things, there would be no reason to seek power and position, except one: the more men are honored, revered, and adored, the more they seem to approach and become similar to God. And what man would not want to resemble Him?” (Guicciardini, *Maxims and Reflections*, 44).

to be beaten by the winds of envy.” He reaches for another metaphor of a rain-dampened coat that has kept inner garments and person still dry and unaffected by the weather. If Guicciardini is innocent, then his spirit is like the inner garments unaffected by the rain. Therefore, he should accept his fate and continue to have confidence in himself. The friend encourages Guicciardini to recall the enormous fortune that characterized his rise. Any complaint during a perhaps temporary reversal would be unseemly. He reminds Guicciardini that fortune is capricious, never stable for anyone. Guicciardini should realize that things could be much worse, and his reputation could improve if he successfully faces and overcomes adversity.

The friend then turns to the political situation that led to Guicciardini’s fall. The advice given to Pope Clement VII about establishing a league with the Venetian Republic, the French, and the English against Charles V of Spain seemed valid when presented and given the calculation of the interests of the parties at the time. What Guicciardini’s imaginary friend does not mention is that Guicciardini’s focus on the short-term evaluation of self-interest is precisely what led to his predicament. The perpetually shifting alliances and need to rely on former enemies, such as Francesco Maria della Rovere, whose allegiance was suspect, led to the defeat of the Sack of Rome.

In the “Consolation,” Guicciardini refers to Savonarola’s prophecies about the divine wrath to befall Italy’s rulers for their ungodly behavior, precisely the sort of unpredictable element that would throw Guicciardini’s calculations about short-term self-interest into disarray. Guicciardini’s friend asks, “How can a prince’s counselor be expected to advise not only on human affairs but also astrologer’s readings, spirit conjuring, and the prophecies of friars?” He advises acceptance of events with a sense of fatalism about powers greater than oneself.

The next oration, the “Accusation,” is a courtroom harangue that refers to throngs of accusing witnesses and severe judges in the voice of an impassioned republican prosecutor who depicts Guicciardini’s decision to serve the Medici popes as a betrayal of both the Florentine aristocracy and the republic. The “Accusation” recalls the self-loathing, crypto-Savonarolian tone in Guicciardini’s C28 *ricordo* noted by De Sanctis. This longest and most impassioned of the three orations reveals the self-recriminations and remorse gnawing at Guicciardini’s conscience. Guicciardini’s accuser introduces themes of guilt, second-guessing, and hindsighted rationalization of defeat. The prosecutor accuses Guicciardini

of abandoning classical virtues and Christian ethics for the short-term benefits of a career serving the Medici clan. The lesson that the prosecutor seeks to communicate, which is a valid description of Guicciardini's entire career, is that working for one's self-interest within and for the benefit of a corrupt system results in both personal and societal defeat.

In the "Accusation," the prosecutor charges that Guicciardini had been conspiring with the Medici clan since marrying into the Salviati family in 1508. Second, Guicciardini betrayed the republican cause as Florentine ambassador to the court of Ferdinand II when the Spanish monarch aided the Medici coup in 1512. Third, the prosecutor accuses Guicciardini of having prevented a popular uprising that would have led to a reinstatement of a republican government in 1527, when a group of citizens tried to take the Florentine city hall but were convinced by Guicciardini to desist. The final accusation, and perhaps the most pernicious given the enflamed tones from the prosecutor, is that Guicciardini knowingly diverted funds destined for payment to the mercenary troops hired to join the papal Holy League. These unpaid troops then pillaged and ransacked the Florentine hinterland.

A repeated theme in the prosecutor's speech is the difference in levels of civility between republican Florence and the corrupt, theocratically ruled Papal States. In Florence, statues of biblical figures Judith and David, representing courage, stood in front of the Palazzo della Signoria as emblems of republican and civic pride and in contrast to the corruption and tyranny of the Papal States governed by the Medici popes and Guicciardini. The prosecutor depicts Guicciardini as the representative of a den of tyrants who betrayed Florence for personal gain. The prosecutor's listing of the towns sacked by ravaging troops adds authenticity to the oration. The miscalculations so eloquently rationalized in the "Consolation" resulted in epochal havoc and suffering, which should have weighed on Guicciardini's conscience.

Above all, the prosecutor offers unflattering insights into Guicciardini's character, which, given that the author of the piece is Guicciardini himself, recalls the self-loathing tone of Guicciardini's earlier self-confession "To Himself," where Guicciardini with a sense of self-loathing laments his inability to consider nonmaterialistic goals.<sup>13</sup> Guicciardini admittedly

13. See Mark Phillips, *Francesco Guicciardini: The Historian's Craft* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

enjoyed the trappings and the aura of power as president of the papal territories in the Romagna. The prosecutor offers an image of Guicciardini as a lord of rich regions and in contrast to the suffering in the Florentine provinces at the hands of the pope's unpaid, marauding mercenaries.

For a republican, the idea of a Florentine citizen posing as a duke or lord, particularly one as talented as Guicciardini, was a betrayal. The prosecutor compares Guicciardini to mythical monsters like the Hydra and Cerberus and recalls how Guicciardini's schoolmates teased him with the nickname Alcibiades after the ambitious and traitorous Athenian general. The implication is that Guicciardini's lust for power and position was evident from his earliest days and conditioned every decision in his life.

When a citizen born into a republic betrays his country in this manner, the punishment must be severe to serve as a warning for future malefactors. The prosecutor offers precedents from classical times, repeating the name of Alcibiades, pointing to the Athenian practice of ostracism, and indicating the fate of Lucius Tarquinius, who was overthrown by the ancient Romans as the seventh and final king of Rome. The prosecutor's most impassioned examples are Florentine citizens who betrayed the republic and were exiled and even executed, such as Filippo Strozzi, Bernardo Rucellai, Donato Barbadori, Bernardo del Nero, and Corso Donati. With these examples, the prosecutor makes the argument that republican liberty requires the decisive punishment of corrupt citizens. By preventing a popular uprising in 1527 that could have restored the in 1512 republican constitution, Guicciardini joined the company of the worst figures in Florentine history.

The prosecutor suggests how the pope's affairs could have been handled. A leader like the pope, or even the head of a city-state like Florence, must risk involvement only when not to do so might provoke the ultimate victor. The prosecutor argues that the failure to follow this commonsense policy of approaching the eventual victor in a conflict to offer help against the loser brought ruin not just to the papacy and Florence but to all Italy. Here, Guicciardini's prosecutor presciently described the stereotypical duplicity that would condition subsequent Italian foreign policy under the practice of determining which side is stronger in a conflict and then offering aid to the winner. Ironically, Guicciardini imagines his prosecutor speaking in terms evoking the philosophy of the *particulare*, the idea of self-interest, where the only real sin is to miscalculate self-interest and thereby to suffer damage or defeat.

The prosecutor's speech seems too vibrant, damning, and brimming with Savonarolian invective to be a mere rhetorical exercise. Guicciardini must have felt the weight of his role in the political and military defeat of the papacy and, by extension, of Florence. After the soothing tones of the "Consolation," in which Guicciardini's imaginary friend advised him to take comfort in the lessons of religion and philosophy and to retire with honor, the strident attack in the "Accusation" forces the reader to reconsider the hardship and suffering of events in which Guicciardini played a pivotal role. Guicciardini's decisions had vast repercussions. He was tormented by the idea that his miscalculations of self-interest and decision to follow the path of personal profit, position, and class status by following the Medici were beyond the capacity of his free will to discern, an effective criticism of his philosophy.

The final and third oration, the "Defense," lacks the passion of the "Accusation" and the philosophical tones of the "Consolation." Guicciardini writes in his own voice in a concluding segment of the classical *in utramque partem*, pro-and-contra exercise he would adopt in the *History of Italy*, echoing the structure of Thucydides's *History of the Peloponnesian Wars*. In the "Defense," Guicciardini cites examples from classical and Florentine history of false accusations against virtuous men, in particular, Francesco's forbearer, Giovanni Guicciardini, who fended off accusations of malfeasance in a fourteenth-century siege of Lucca before eventual exoneration. Guicciardini also cites Roman general Fabius Maximus, who faced indictment in Rome before any victory over Hannibal became definitive.

Throughout this final oration, Guicciardini adopts rhetorical strategies revealing the brilliance of his legal abilities. He dismisses the charges as hearsay unconfirmed by reliable witnesses. He questions the credibility of the few available witnesses as driven by hopes for pecuniary gain rather than a desire to reveal the truth. Guicciardini cleverly focuses on the reliability of testimony from marauding soldiers caught in the act of stealing. Since such witnesses had no direct contact with Guicciardini, they cannot establish a direct link to him. His repeated call for an audit of papal treasurer Alessandro del Caccia further deflects blame.<sup>14</sup> By casting

14. Alessandro del Caccia was in the papal treasury and was eventually summoned by the last Florentine Republic to account for his handling of Florence's monetary contribution to the war effort. Melissa Meriam Bullard, *Filippo Strozzi and the Medici: Favor and Finance in Sixteenth-Century Florence and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,



doubt on a direct connection between himself and actual payments made to soldiers, Guicciardini ably diffuses the prosecutor's charge of corruption from the "Accusation."

Guicciardini questions the prosecutor's ability to establish motive and eloquently affirms his desire to retain a good name and reputation. Guicciardini admits a certain embarrassment at having to praise himself at this point, and he astutely portrays himself as a victim. He depicts his career for the Papal States not as an ambitious move to enhance his station in life but as a mission to bring good government to populations accustomed to the corruption of ecclesiastical rule. Guicciardini relates how he became the governor of Modena at the pivotal age of thirty-three and would have been able to steal and commit whatever crimes he may have desired. He claims to have refused gold weighing as much as the giant—a reference to the statue of David by Michelangelo outside the Palazzo della Signoria and commissioned as a symbol of Florentine republican ardor. Since Guicciardini ruled honestly, he gained the gratitude of the citizenry who, according to his version of events, petitioned Leo X's successor, Hadrian VI, to reappoint him as governor. As a Florentine appointed by another Florentine, the Medici pope Leo X, Guicciardini expected the short-lived Dutch pope to relieve him of his duties. However, Guicciardini gained reappointment because of his reputation as an able administrator. As in the "Consolation," Guicciardini convincingly concludes that he had no motive to steal from the pope, to risk the ruin of the Holy League, or to earn the wrath of the Florentines by not paying the soldiers.

After Guicciardini successfully rebuts the charges against him, the "Defense" affords insights into the inner workings of the papal Holy League against Charles V and the chaos that reigned in the papal military administration. These brief descriptions reveal reasons for the collapse of papal forces. Guicciardini allows himself recriminations against former colleagues in the Holy League, repeating allusions about the potential malfeasance of the papal treasurer, Alessandro del Caccia. He decries the conduct of Francesco Maria della Rovere, commander of the Venetian contingent of the Holy League, who never brought his troops into action to Guicciardini's satisfaction and who in Guicciardini's final version of events in the *History of Italy* receives much blame for the Sack of Rome.

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2008); John N. Stephens. *The Fall of the Florentine Republic, 1512–1530* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

Guicciardini gives a chilling description of the difficulty controlling the unruly mercenaries, the Black Bands, and the importance in the defeat of the Holy League of the death in a skirmish of their leader, Giovanni dalle Bande Nere, in 1526, which Guicciardini cites as a turning point in the war. Guicciardini's short and cutting descriptions of the havoc and danger caused by these ungovernable troops allows an insight into the disorder of the Holy League's armies. Finally, he paints a damning picture of the pettiness and incompetence of the pope's other military commanders, such as Guido Rangoni and Count Caiazzo, who according to Guicciardini's account stopped him on the road one morning with murderous intentions after the Holy League's defeat had become evident.<sup>15</sup>

Once the "Defense" arrives at this recriminatory level, the oration breaks off in midparagraph, interrupted as if Guicciardini felt no need to pursue the topic further. What remains is an impression of the chaotic drama of the events and the confusion reigning in papal forces in the preparation and aftermath of the Sack of Rome. Guicciardini vents his frustration that as a purported master in the art of calculation of self-interest, he found himself in a situation where events beyond his control or influence resulted in disaster. In the defense of Parma, Guicciardini, aided by fortune, had been able to appraise the situation by the quick determination of the self-interests of all parties for a successful outcome. In the events leading to the Sack of Rome, this ability failed him.

On the surface, Guicciardini ably examines different viewpoints in these orations. However, the goal of the *in utramque partem* exercise is to make capital of opposing points to arrive at a fuller understanding of a subject. Guicciardini's orations do not adequately delve into the flaws in his personal philosophy of the primacy of self-interest by resolving his inability or unwillingness to consider the emotional, the irrational, and the unpredictable. The "Consolation" does not reach the discomfort in Guicciardini's earlier note "To Himself." Guicciardini ably refutes the charges from the "Accusation" with almost too much ease in the "Defense." Despite undergoing the *in utramque partem* exercise, Guicciardini does not arrive at a synthesis for a true self-examination, even after a defeat as absolute and embarrassing as the Sack of Rome, which negated the reputation he had earned for competence via exploits such as the defense of Parma. After the

15. Guido Rangoni (1485–1539) and Roberto da Sanseverino, Count Caiazzo (1500–1532) were Italian *condottieri* (military leaders).

Sack of Rome, Guicciardini continued in his former ways, with further miscalculations of self-interests, serving not necessarily his interests or those of his class or compatriots, but of the Medici goal of a hereditary duchy.

In the same period as the composition of the orations, Guicciardini penned the “Savonarolian Excerpts” (1528). These summaries cover the time from Savonarola’s sermons from January 1495 to the period following the expulsion of Lorenzo de’ Medici’s successor Piero (the Unfortunate) and entry of the troops of French king Charles VIII into Tuscany to the period preceding Savonarola’s execution in 1498. For the “Savonarolian Excerpts,” Guicciardini scoured Savonarola’s fiery sermons with a mind that the 1527 Sack of Rome may have been the divine retribution of Savonarola’s predictions rather than the 1494 French invasion of Charles VIII. A possible conclusion for Guicciardini in his review of Savonarola’s sermons was that the players in the Italian Wars were merely pawns in the larger scope of events that included not just peninsular or continental politics but divine intervention, a fatalistic conclusion that would render moot Guicciardini’s philosophy of the primacy of the interpretation of self-interest.

Attraction to the writings and sermons of the doomed friar was somewhat of a tradition in the Guicciardini family. Francesco’s father, Piero, had been sympathetic to the Savonarolian faction in Florentine politics and discouraged Francesco from a career in the church.<sup>16</sup> Francesco’s brother, Luigi, composed a dialogue on Savonarola, *About Savonarola*, as well as an account of the Sack of Rome, *The Sack of Rome*.<sup>17</sup> Francesco’s contribution to Savonarolian literature pivoting off Guicciardini’s reexamination of Savonarola’s sermons included herein would reappear as a narrative thread in the *History of Italy* (1540). When Guicciardini finally rewrote his history of Italy for the third time—after his earlier attempts in

16. Ridolfi, *Life of Francesco Guicciardini*, 8.

17. Luigi di Piero Guicciardini, *Del Savonarola: Ovvero dialogo tra Francesco Zati e Pieradovardo Giachinotti il giorno dopo la battaglia di Gavinara*, ed. Bono Simonetta (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1959). His *Historia del sacco di Roma* has been translated into English: Luigi Guicciardini, *The Sack of Rome*, trans. J. H. McGregor (New York: Italica, 1993). For a discussion of this “Savonarolian” genre, see Ginori Conti, *Bibliografia delle opere del Savonarola*, ed. Piero Ginori Conti (Florence: Fondazione Ginori Conti, 1939). See also Mario Ferrara, *Nuova bibliografia savonaroliana* (Vadus: Topos, 1981), and Armando Verde and Donald Weinstein, *Savonarola: La vita, le opere* (Venice: Marsilio, 1998). Ridolfi and Palmarocchi have identified the composition date of the “Estratti savonaroliani” as 1528 owing to an oversight in the manuscript in which Guicciardini dated one of Savonarola’s sermons 1528 instead of 1498. See Guicciardini, *Scritti autobiografici e rari*, ed. Palmarocchi, 373; Ridolfi, *Life of Francesco Guicciardini*, 310.

the *Florentine History* (1508) and *Florentine Matters* (1527)—Savonarola’s celestial view of Italian affairs and the apocalyptic consequences thereof would reappear in the *History of Italy*, with Guicciardini introducing Savonarola’s prediction of dire events.<sup>18</sup>

By excerpting Savonarola’s sermons, Guicciardini would seem to be revisiting themes from the early note “To Himself” penned when he was thirty and at the beginning of his political career. In “To Himself,” Guicciardini had bemoaned the flaws in his character that did not allow for conduct that could lead to spiritual salvation. The question alluded to in “To Himself” is whether self-interest is better served by a worldly or spiritual meter. However, neither the “Consolation,” “Accusation,” “Defense,” nor the “Savonarolian Excerpts” resulted in a transformation of Guicciardini’s subsequent conduct. In the aftermath of the Sack of Rome, Guicciardini continued to serve as an intermediary between the republican government in Florence and the Medici pope in Rome, Clement VII, a role he reprised from his early career following the Medici coup of 1512. Again, in the last years of Guicciardini’s life and career, unpredictable and irrational events would resurface, frustrating his approach to base action on interpretations of the self-interests of parties involved.

Guicciardini had successfully dissuaded radical republicans from restoring the republic in the immediate aftermath of the 1527 Sack of Rome. However, the more radical faction assumed power in Florence in 1529. In June of 1529, Pope Clement VII and Charles V came to terms in the Treaty of Barcelona. Clement VII crowned Charles V as Holy Roman Emperor in February 1530 after a procession to the Cathedral of San Petronio in Bologna. Part of the deal brokered by Clement VII was a return of the Medici to Florence under a Medici duchy ruled by Alessandro de’ Medici (1510–1537), with Guicciardini serving as Alessandro’s chief advocate.

In October 1529, imperial forces began a brutal siege of Florence. The republican government reacted with justifiable rage, summoning Guicciardini to answer charges before a republican court as anticipated in the “Accusation.” The Florentine Republic fell to Spanish imperial forces in August 1530, despite Francesco Ferruccio’s (1489–1530) heroic resistance and defeat by betrayal. After the fall of Florence, Clement VII sent

18. Francesco Guicciardini, *History of Italy*, book 2, chapter 2 (Milan: Garzanti, 1988), 165. See also Enrico Gusberty, “Il Savonarola del Guicciardini,” *Nuova Rivista Storica* 55 (1971): 21–89; Francesco Guicciardini, *Guicciardini: History of Italy and History of Florence*, trans. Cecil Grayson (New York: Washington Square Press, 1964).

Guicciardini back to the city to organize a hereditary Medici duchy under Alessandro de' Medici.

In this period, Guicciardini composed treatises on Florence's political future. "Response on Behalf of the Duke to the Complaints to the Exiles" (1531) has a different tone from "How to Ensure the State to the House of the Medici" (1513) penned nearly twenty years earlier. The earlier contained little mention of extrapeninsular powers and retains hints of republican pride and dignity as Guicciardini adopts his meter of a somewhat cynical discernment of the self-interest of mainly civic factions. In the earlier treatise, Guicciardini had affirmed his long-held hopes regarding the participation of his optimate class for a Florentine oligarchical government. However, by the time of the ascension of Alessandro de' Medici as the latest in a long line of Medici rulers, the decline of the political position of Guicciardini's optimates who had sought to temper Medici rule since the rise of Cosimo de' Medici (1389–1464) was irreversible. Nevertheless, Guicciardini still promoted the idea of a government structure with a monarch guided and advised by citizens of his optimate class.

In the later treatise, "Response on Behalf of the Duke to Complaints of the Exiles" (1531), Guicciardini's arguments are no longer grounded on interpretation of good government or civic polity but on survival and acquiescence to the will of Charles V. Like all Guicciardini's work, the later treatise focuses on the calculation of the self-interest of the parties involved. Guicciardini recognizes the impracticality of a blanket expulsion of all Florentines who supported a restoration of the republic. To expel all such citizens would cripple the city's economy. Guicciardini seeks to guide affairs according to the need of participants to save face, including Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici, who wished to rule as regent instead of Alessandro. Guicciardini dismisses objections that the construction of a fortress, the still extant Fortezza da Basso, was a symbol of oppression in confirmation of Machiavelli's theory in *The Prince* of fortresses as bulwarks against popular rebellion rather than foreign invasion. Guicciardini disregards concerns from disgruntled republicans when, in fact, a sizeable exile community would attempt a revolt against the Medici after the assassination of Alessandro in January 1537.

"Response on Behalf of the Duke to the Complaints of the Exiles" (1531) evidences a fatal acceptance that the irrevocable authoritarian wave had reached fruition in Florence. Under the secular trend toward political authoritarianism, previously nominally republican governments,

including Florence, were reduced to subservience to hereditary lords. The city's government did not derive from the competition between civic factions as much as from the whims and humor of external lords, whose personal ambitions and prejudices would have more say in determining the Florentine government than popular will or optimate counsel. Guicciardini's political prejudices, his desire to limit popular participation by oligarchical government, are evident in the piece, as is his mistrust of the motives and ability of hereditary rule under a regal house. To this end, Guicciardini saw himself, and those of his class, as the ideal councilors and participants in a government where participation was restricted to a ruling elite. However, that influence was to be marginalized under a Medici duchy, which in turn was subservient to the global empire of Charles V. When Clement died in 1534, Paul III succeeded him as pope. Guicciardini refused an offer from the new papal administration, ending a long career as a papal adviser and governor.

Guicciardini's next act on behalf of the Medici was to defend Duke Alessandro from the charges of Florentine exiles. The siege of Florence had produced a sizable and well-heeled exile community. Alessandro's reputation for lasciviousness further enraged the vestiges of republican sentiment in the city.<sup>19</sup> The Florentine exiles somewhat naively sought redress for damages suffered following the siege and fall of Florence before Charles V, now absolute arbiter of Italian affairs. Guicciardini penned speeches, including the "Response on Behalf of the Duke to the Complaints of the Exiles," defending Alessandro and a hereditary Medici duchy after Alessandro's consolidation of his position through marriage to Margaret of Parma (1522–1586), the illegitimate daughter of Charles V.

Despite his loyalty to the Medici, Guicciardini did not serve in the Florentine government after Alexander's assassination by his cousin Lorenzaccio in 1537. The next Medici Guicciardini advised, Cosimo I de' Medici (1519–1574), was the son of Giovanni dalle Bande Nere, the charismatic military leader whose death on the battlefield by newly introduced firearms in 1526 had compromised the military organization of papal forces before the Sack of Rome. Cosimo I hailed from a branch of the Medici clan previously marginalized from accession to power. He even had family ties with Guicciardini's wife, Maria Salviati. Cosimo I was

19. Catherine Fletcher, *The Black Prince of Florence: The Spectacular Life and Treacherous World of Alessandro de' Medici* (London: Bodley Head, 2016).

only seventeen at the time of Alessandro's murder. Guicciardini, this time miscalculating his own self-interest as well as that of the future duke, purportedly considered Cosimo I as the perfect vehicle for an optimate-moderated duchy. However, Cosimo I proved to be more politically astute than Guicciardini and perhaps did not want to arouse more anti-Medici sentiment by retaining Guicciardini, who was openly despised by remnants of the city's republican faction as a Medici lackey. Cosimo I quickly moved to establish himself as duke of Florence, dispatching Guicciardini from service in Florentine politics and paying lip service to Guicciardini's hopes for a duchy tempered by counsel from an optimate oligarchy.

When Guicciardini took forced retirement from political life, the Medici held Florence as hereditary dukes without any pretense of representative, constitutional rule. Guicciardini's hopes for a political future of Florence where a semblance of representative government might temper the authoritarianism of a Medici duchy were dashed. The Florentine exiles attempted to retake Florence militarily, but Cosimo I defeated them at the Battle of Montemurlo in 1537 with Spanish military support. Guicciardini later declined further papal appointment in Romagna to work on his *History of Italy*, allowing him a forum to explain and understand his actions and the fate of Italy in a wider global and even divine context.<sup>20</sup>

Guicciardini's abilities, the acumen and the grit he displayed at the siege of Parma as described in the "Report of the Defense of Parma," had served the Medici clan rather than his optimate peers and ultimately Guicciardini himself. Guicciardini had worked for authoritarianism with all of its abuses, wastes, and prejudices. He actively opposed the more heroic if irrational currents of his time: whether Savonarola's pre-Protestant religious fundamentalism or the desperate, heroic republicanism of Francesco Ferruccio and the doomed exiles who fought the Medici duchy for which Guicciardini was chief advocate.

The flaw in Guicciardini's mindset and approach was to focus on self-interest without accounting for irrational and unpredictable aspects in human behavior. Guicciardini seemingly miscalculated the intentions of the wily Spanish king Ferdinand II, whose military aid brought a Medici coup in 1512. His counsel and conduct of papal forces led to the

20. Emanuela Lugnani Scarano, "Le redazioni dei *Ricordi* e la storia del pensiero guicciardiniano al 1512 al 1530," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 147 (1970): 183–259. See also Emanuela Lugnani Scarano, *La ragione e le cose: Tre studi su Guicciardini* (Pisa: ETS, 1980).

defeat and disgrace in 1527 of his benefactor, the Medici pope Clement VII. Guicciardini did reconsider the specter of Savonarolian prophecy in the aftermath of the Sack of Rome. However, he continued to focus on material self-interest rather than on impulses he could not calculate or understand: Savonarolian religious fundamentalism, the fervent anti-Medici sentiment of Florentine republicans or oligarchs, the gritty lust for violence and pillage of religiously inspired troops, or even the petty jealousies among the European elite, which led to events like the murder of Duke Alessandro. Guicciardini's method of calculating the self-interests of participants and planning for action therefrom was unreliable because it did not allow for the irrational, the unpredictable, and factors of greater breadth than Guicciardini's ability for foresight and adaptation. Guicciardini's advocacy and defense of a hereditary Medici duchy under Alessandro de' Medici became just another step toward the foundation of the Medici duchy. When the next Medici duke, Cosimo I, removed Guicciardini from any position in his regime after Alessandro's murder, Guicciardini's marginalization was complete and the flaw in his philosophy evident. Guicciardini's ultimate contribution may be as a precursor of the social science of economics. Guicciardini's concentration on self-interest presages the reduction by modern economists of human activity to quantifiable data. However, the results in terms of accuracy of prediction are not markedly more reliable than the celestial calculations of the astrologers or the divinations of the soothsayers who were replaced as the principal counselors for government policy.