

Of Conspiracies: Machiavelli and Power Transition*

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Abstract: The largest sections of Machiavelli's major works are dedicated to one theme: conspiracies. In these sections, he details how sudden changes to the distribution of power are attempted and offers advice. Previous scholarship has taken Machiavelli's remarks at face value, yet there is a tension between his counsel and the examples he provides. This paper elaborates Machiavelli's thoughts on conspiracies and checks his strategies against the empirical record that he furnishes in his Florentine Histories. The paper finds that Machiavelli subtly suggests strategic tendencies through his empirics, amplifying or undercutting his advice to the attentive reader.

Niccolo Machiavelli is often portrayed as, at best, a wily instructor of *Realpolitik*, or, at worst, a demonic siren for immorality and cruelty. Some paint him as the counselor of princes and tyrants, others as the defender of republican virtue. But if Machiavelli is trying to teach lessons, it would be best to determine what they are. In this paper, I try to discern Machiavelli's lessons on conspiracies. Because the *Prince* and *Discourses* are primarily political theory and the *Florentine Histories* primarily history on which to base theory, they are excellent complements to study the efficacy of conspiracies.¹ To do this requires three sections. First, I turn to the books in which Machiavelli presents "all he knows" to find advice for princes and conspirators. Then, the next section empirically

¹ Nevertheless, they are not perfect complements. The *Florentine Histories* denounces the weakness of the moderns while including only modern examples. A fuller treatment of this subject would include all NM's ancient and modern examples of conspiracies. But at present one need only be aware of this limitation.

tests Machiavelli's advice against his examples in the *Florentine Histories*. Lastly, I will try to distill Machiavelli's lessons on conspiracies.

I. Theory Section:

Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Governmental Overthrow,
But were Afraid to Ask.

Machiavelli has no shortage of advice on conspiracies. The primary areas where he discourses on them are in his *Prince* 19 and *Discourses* III 6 — books that contain “all he knows” — and in the *Florentine Histories* VIII 1.² Of course, he gives more advice than space allows me to relate, but I will examine each work respectively as best I can.

A. *The Prince*

The first book that contains “all that I have learned” (*P* Ded. Let.) is Machiavelli's *Prince*. Logically then, the place one would expect to find all that he knows on conspiracies would be *P* 19. This relatively lengthy section begins by advising princes to avoid being held hateful or contemptible. Machiavelli harps on evading hatred by counseling princes to use well the persons of the lion and the fox (*P*, p. 78), to maintain one's majesty (*P*, p. 80), and not allowing people who hate you to be near (*P*, p. 79).

Elsewhere in the *Prince*, Machiavelli repeatedly echoes his cautions on avoiding hatred and contempt. He argues that being unarmed makes one contemptible (*P*, p. 58), that being liberal may make one hated and contemptible (*P*, p. 65), and that violating

² For later reference, the editions I will be working with are as follows. I use Harvey C. Mansfield's second edition of *The Prince* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), whose pagination is exactly the same as the first edition. For the *Discourses on Livy*, I rely on Mansfield and Tarcov's translation (Chicago:

personal property and others' women makes one hated (*P*, p. 67). For defense against internal threats, he exhorts the prince to have good arms which makes for good friends (*P*, p. 72). But it should be pointed out that the examples Machiavelli adduces, Agathocles and Nabis, to assert that popular princes stop conspiracies were both killed in conspiracies. So in theory, one should avoid hatred, but the lessons in application are not clear.

That is not the only advice given, however. In *P* 8, Machiavelli commends the conspiratorial example of Liverotto, who tricked the leading men of Fermo, killed them all, strong-armed the magistrate, and ruled because all those who would have opposed him were dead. Machiavelli also stresses independence and self-reliance on the part of the prince, for he should prefer "to lose with his own than win with others" (*P*, p. 55), and "found himself on what is his, not on what is someone else's" (*P*, p. 68).

B. The Discourses

Chronologically, the next book that includes "as much as I know" (*D* Ded. Let.) is Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy*. Here he elaborates at greatest length in "Of Conspiracies", and along similar lines as the *Prince*. Early in the work, he contends that conspiracies arise from hatred (*D*, p. 12), a familiar sounding piece of advice.

But later, Machiavelli expatiates methodically. In *D* III 6, he begins by offering advice to help princes and private individuals. Conspiracies, he says, may be made against the prince or the fatherland (*D*, pp. 219-220), and cautions once again against being hated or contemptible. Yet in the *Discourses*, he mentions two examples, Spurius

University of Chicago Press, 1996), and for the *Florentine Histories*, I depend upon Banfield and Mansfield's translation (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

Cassius and Manlius Capitolinus, where citizens of an incorrupt republic consider conspiring.³ Again, the lesson on avoiding hatred is not exactly clear.

He cautions that menacing opponents is unwise, but executing enemies prudent (*D*, p. 219). This follows from his idea that people must either be caressed or eliminated. Great men familiar to the prince are the source of all conspiracies, he declares, and that occasionally stems from granting too many favors (*D*, p. 222). In his example of this section, Machiavelli speaks of a conspiracy that deserved to succeed, but the perpetrator was “blinded” in “managing the enterprise. For if they knew how to do this wickedness with prudence it would be impossible that they not succeed.” (*D*, p. 222) Therefore, poor judgment or having one’s eyes deceived substantially impairs conspirators’ success.

Communication and exposure plague conspiracies, asserts Machiavelli, and the only true remedy for these problems is for a conspirator not to tip his hand to others until the moment of execution arrives. One needs accomplices but more than a handful begs disaster (*D*, pp. 223-4). Moreover, leaving written records is unwise (*D*, p. 225). Never one to believe in unalloyed evils (or goods), Machiavelli says that exposure, like any necessity, compels actions. If conspirators think they will be killed, they act very well in executing plans (*D*, p. 226).

The dangers in execution are primarily fourfold (*D*, p. 227). Changing the order or altering the plan confuses the whole plot. Hence, one should stick to plan when inconveniences arise. Conspirators who are lacking spirit (as with the Pazzi) foul the whole affair, either by cowardice or reverence. Conspirators who lack prudence (i.e. picking the less bad as good, *P*, p. 91) muddle conspiracies. And lastly, conspirators

³ This is not my observation, see Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 169.

must follow through with their plans, leaving no one alive they planned to kill. Otherwise, they are exposed to those who wish to avenge the dead prince (*D*, p. 231). Conspirators who lack prudence or spirit are “carried away by that confusion of brain” which bungles their designs (*D*, p. 229).

Other pieces of Machiavellian advice are that conspirators should be managed by those experienced in such matters over those who are spirited (*D*, p. 229), everyone should refrain from conspiring against many heads (*D*, p. 230), conspiracies against the fatherland are less dangerous (*D*, p. 232), and poison is not a good idea (*D*, p. 234) because it widens the circle of conspirators and might not be fully effective.

C. The Florentine Histories

In his earlier works, Machiavelli put historical examples as illustrations inside his political generalizing. In the *Florentine Histories*, he puts the political generalizing inside of his history. But the purpose of his *Florentine Histories* is to teach lessons (*FH* Preface). Since the examples of conspiracies are dealt with later, in this section I only look to where Machiavelli addresses conspiracies in theory, that is, *FH* VIII 1.

Once again, Machiavelli links conspiracies to hatred of the prince (*FH*, p. 317). He begins, quite naturally, with history, discussing how Medici power growth encouraged conspiracies. And how these conspiracies only made the Medici greater, but gave them greater cause to offend Florentine citizens. Hence, fear led to security-seeking, security-seeking to injury, injury to hatred, and hatred to ruin.

II. Empirical Section:

Machiavelli's Examples, Methodology, Terminology, and Findings.

Fortunately, Machiavelli illustrates his conspiracy theories by narrating numerous examples of modern conspiracies in his *Florentine Histories*. To test the role of each factor requires testing all the cases. Doing this calls for proper methodology and terminology.

A. Methodology.

For methodology, I employ the method of difference. First, I gather a list of major conspiracies in the *Florentine Histories*.⁴ Although this list is neither definitive nor exhaustive, it is a good window on Machiavelli's teachings.⁵ Next, I compile the conspiracies by characteristic and check these characteristics against the conspiracies ultimate success or failure.⁶ Then I attempt to distill the importance of the different factors in conspiracies' outcomes.

Success and failure are not easily defined. Whether Machiavelli writes his ideas on conspiracies for people or princes is beyond this paper's purview. Doubtless lessons to help people conspire against their prince can be used by princes to avoid conspiracies

⁴ To examine this list or vet my work, see appendix 1.

⁵ I say "good window" for good reason. Let me start by conceding that the analysis is flawed. The universe of cases is too small to run a regression for meaningful results, it's nearly impossible to quantify qualitative data properly, mistakes will inevitably be made classing the examples appropriately, some important factors may be left out, correlation and causality relations may not be extricated, and not every case furnishes all the desired information. Nonetheless, the failings of my technique are made up for by the slice of empirical support or refutation the analysis yields. Sure the method is imperfect, but it's still helpful. Machiavelli may well have approved of my rational scientific analysis of conspiracies. On the rational, scientific method of Machiavelli contrasted to Clausewitz's creative and intuitive innovation on the study of war, see Felix Gilbert, "Machiavelli: The Renaissance of the Art of War" in Peter Paret ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 30-1.

and vice versa. Since the lessons can cut both ways, I arbitrarily adopt the conspirators' perspective. Thus, I measure success by the conspirators' ability to overthrow their government for the medium term. Over the short term, many can overthrow a government briefly. Over the long term, a distinction must be made before a later conspiracy unseats a previous one so that the two are not lumped together.

The universe of cases is sixteen. Each case, save for two (the Ciompi and Pazzi Conspiracies), is named for its primary target. I do this because each case must be named, preferably with brevity, and conspirators usually equal or outnumber their targets. The major cases I have chosen are as follows: the Duke of Athens, Ciompi, Maso Degli Albizzi, Florentine Revolution, Pagolo, Cosimo de' Medici, Rinaldo, Erasmo — Governor for Filippo Visconti, Bartolommeo di Senso, Annibale Bentivoglio, Piero de' Medici, Cesare Petrucci, Galeazzo, Count Girolamo, and Galeatto. Approximately half the cases are in Florence and the other half elsewhere in Italy, and of the Florentine examples, half are successful. Overall, nine of the sixteen conspiracies failed.

Because the cases are all considered together does not mean they are all of equal importance. Machiavelli stresses some more than others. A quarter of the cases (Ciompi, Bentivoglio, Pazzi, and Girolamo), he uses in the *Prince* and *Discourses*. In addition, he expounds upon the Galeazzo Conspiracy in Milan extensively in the *Florentine Histories*. Admittedly, this is a limitation of my method; I cannot weigh the cases or inject Machiavelli's complete commentary. On the other hand, I only claim this method to be a good window not a panoramic vista.

B. Terminology.

⁶ To examine these tables or check my work, see appendix 2.

Machiavelli suggests that fourteen variables are significant. In this section, I define these terms.

Strategic Success. What is the outcome of the conspiracy? Do the conspirators cause an overthrow of government or not?

Tactical Success. Paraphrasing Clausewitz, conspiracies are really politics by other means. And to continue the military metaphor, one can win the battle and lose the war. So too with conspiracies, one can execute the plan flawlessly and still fail to overthrow the government. Therefore, I distinguish between tactical (the physical execution of a conspiracy) and strategic (the political outcome of a conspiracy) success.

Targets. By this I mean, is there one primary target or more than one? Machiavelli advises one target for optimal success, but how important is this advice empirically?

Conspirators. The point of this variable is to test whether it matters to have few or many conspirators involved. The problem with this variable is that numbers are not clearly given. The number of conspirators is only noteworthy when there are very few. Otherwise, many could mean ten or over one hundred. In short, I define “a few” as less than fifty, not because Machiavelli felt that way — he likely did not — but because that is the clearest line I am able to draw.

Exposed. Was the conspiracy revealed to the target? What impact does the target’s knowing versus not knowing of a conspiracy have on its ultimate success?

Hatred. Machiavelli counsels princes repeatedly not to be hated if they are to avoid conspiracies. But even he admits that conspiracies aim at princes who are not

hated, and hated princes can fend off conspiracies. How important is hatred of the prince in a conspiracy?

Friends. With friends, I intend reliable allies that aid the prince during a conspiracy. When trouble arises, do the princes' friends make a significant effort to save him from ruin?

Arms. Closely bound up in good friends is the matter of whether one has or can get good arms to quell the conspiracy. I interpret arms to be either the military, moral, or intellectual force to render the enemy ineffectual.⁷ However, one can only judge “good arms” retrospectively. This is a problem. Usually force settles conspiracies and then obviously the stronger side will always win by definition. Given that conflicting parties are frequently optimistic about success beforehand,⁸ and there is no real way to test good arms before a conspiracy, this category is problematic.

Deceived. This is a euphemistic proxy measure of stupidity. Does the conspirator measure his forces well? Does he measure his opponent well? Does he measure the people well? Most important, one who undertakes such a dangerous enterprise should understand reality well and not be deceived by idealized notions of how politics should work.⁹ Clearly, one side should always miscalculate, otherwise there would probably be no contest.¹⁰ I look for passages in which the conspirators exercise

⁷ My sincere apologies for such a crass definition of “good arms”. Although NM’s conception of good arms is more nuanced, I do not fully grasp it and cannot include it in my study. For a better presentation of Machiavelli’s subtlety, see Harvey C. Mansfield, *Machiavelli’s Virtue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), chapter 1.

⁸ On pre-conflict optimism, see Geoffrey Blainey, *Causes of War* (New York: Free Press, 1988), chapters 3 and 8.

⁹ I am borrowing this notion from Isaiah Berlin. See Isaiah Berlin, “The Originality of Machiavelli”, in Hardy and Hausheer eds., *The Proper Study of Mankind* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1998), pp. 283, 286, 289, 291, 311-12.

¹⁰ I say “probably” because there are instances — such as preventive war logic, investing in a reputation for toughness, and enforcement problems — where parties calculate correctly and still chose to fight. For a

poor judgment in Machiavelli's eyes to determine if they are deceived. What this category misses, however, is when princes are deceived. For instance, Cosimo delivers himself to his conspirators, despite prudent advice not to. Alas, I cannot capture everything.

Plan Changes. Is the plan altered at the last minute? Do the conspirators adhere to the plot? Machiavelli does not always report on the conspirators' plans, making testing for this difficult. Machiavelli is not supportive of those who waver. Surgeons do not get squeamish operating, neither should conspirators when they operate.

Spirit. Do the conspirators have a good spirit? Nerve and audacity come into play here. Do some conspirators back out or lose their will?

Prince or Fatherland. Machiavelli makes the distinction between conspiring to overthrow the prince and conspiring for one's fatherland. The latter is much rarer than the former, he says. In looking at the present examples, grouping cases accordingly has proved practically impossible. Intentions in the *Florentine Histories*, like in real life, are very opaque. Because of this, I try to discern intention wherever possible, but make no claim to be able to analyze this category coherently.

Experience. It is hard to know what Machiavelli meant by experience. Experience with killing, experience in war, or experience in plotting and executing a conspiracy? Many conspirators have had the first, some the second, and I know of none that have had the third. Since I can check for none but the third, that is what it must be, making this variable unhelpful.

better description of this, see James Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations of War", *International Organization*, vol. 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995), pp. 379-414.

Poison. Was the target poisoned? In the *Florentine Histories*, none of my major cases involved poisoning. Hence, this too is a useless variable.

C. Findings

Examining the data,¹¹ a few salient points emerge, which I portray from the conspirators point of view. But these points may just as easily be stated conversely as advice to princes.

- When conspirators are tactically successfully, they ultimately fail almost as often as they succeed. Nevertheless, almost never does strategic success occur with tactical failure. Thus, if conspirators want to succeed, they better execute their plan.
- Conspiracies are much more likely to succeed if there is only one primary target. This is not to say having one target makes fortune smile on one's enterprise. Quite the opposite. Conspiracies focusing on one target failed more often than they succeeded.
- The number of conspirators did not predict much of anything. Examples fell almost evenly across the board.
- Conspiracies that were revealed before execution were almost equally likely to succeed as fail. So too with conspiracies that were not exposed. Therefore, being exposed is not very likely to hinder or help governmental overthrow.

¹¹ Examining the data (appendix 2) will also reveal that occasionally cases had to be excluded from consideration. Machiavelli does not know, or perhaps include, the particulars that I search for, and I cannot give "definitive judgment" until I know "the particulars". (P 20) Thus my findings are limited by these omissions and consequently my conclusions are tentative. Still, because NM's favorite words are "but", "nonetheless", and "nevertheless", he may well approve of this too.

- Hatred toward the prince turns out to be a draw. Although it may be an important consideration to some, conspirators cannot foresee victory just because a prince is hated. In fact, success appears to have no relation to animosity towards the prince.
- There is a strong relationship between the prince having good friends and the conspiracy carrying the day. Where the prince has good friends, he is more than three times as likely to foil plots, and where he does not he is half as likely. This may be because good friends correlate with good arms, but I do not know for certain. Nonetheless, good friends appear very useful.
- “Good arms” is not a very interesting measure. All the conspiracies involved force, and the side with the most won. But it is not always self-evident which side can bring the most to bear, it is somewhat a matter of opinion. And that, as Twain asserts, is what makes horses race. Thus, one could assert that good arms predict victory, but who can really predict who has good arms beforehand?
- As one might guess, smart conspirators make for good conspiracies, and stupid ones make for failures. Those who do not understand reality and the spirit of people and the times will be deceived. This is not to say, with Aristotle, that the wise rule. Instead, Machiavelli believes that knowing how reality works, how people and princes act, constitutes the practical intelligence that helps fortune onto one’s side. Victory does not go to idealists, as the Galeazzo Conspiracy attests.
- Resolute conspirators are about equally likely to succeed as fail. But those who change their plans midstream seem to fail without exception. Those who wish to succeed should not, therefore, revise their plans.

- Again, spirited conspirators are slightly more than marginally apt to succeed than fail. Yet, if the conspirators lack spirit, they will unfailingly lose.
- The experience of the conspirators and the use of poison are not very useful factors in the *Florentine Histories*. I found little to no commentary on the experience of conspirators and no evidence of conspiracies involving poison. Thus, I make no statement about the efficacy of either.

III. Conclusions

The “Handbook for Gangsters” and “*Vade Mecum* for Statesmen”¹²

In sum, if Machiavelli says that politics must be based in history and one can generalize from this record, then the foregoing generates several generalizations.

The first conclusion that leaps out is that conspiracies are very dangerous affairs. In fact, “men enter upon no enterprise more dangerous or more bold than this, for it is difficult and very dangerous in every part of it.” (*D*, p. 218) Conspiracies fail more often than not and even when they succeed their initiators do not escape peril. These enterprises are not to be undertaken lightly.

The second conclusion is that conspirators have more cards, but princes have a better hand. This is consistent with Machiavelli’s theories¹³ that anyone can conspire, but princes possess better tools to have their way. Of the variables involved in a conspiracy, princes can control whether they are hated or contemptible and whether that

¹² The first reference is from Bertrand Russell, the second from Benito Mussolini. Quoted in Isaiah Berlin, “The Originality of Machiavelli”, p. 279.

¹³ See *P*, p. 73 and *D*, p. 218.

have good arms and good friends. Conspirators choose time, place, targets, plans, number of participants, and a host of other factors. Nonetheless, aside from being “deceived”, good arms and good friends contribute most to victory.

Under the surface, hatred is not the primary concern, having good arms and stupid conspirators is. For all his equivocal statements on hatred and contempt, Machiavelli illustrates that princes are never safe from conspiracies one way or the other. For princes to insulate their fortune from this treachery takes good arms and, consequently, good friends. For conspirators to insulate themselves from disaster takes knowledge of how the world works, force, poise, and resolve.

Most important, Machiavelli suggests that independence and assertiveness serve conspirators and princes well in a self-help world. Victory usually belongs to the conspirator who is strong, smart, and spirited. The error of many conspirators is that they depend on too much. They trust others who, in learning of conspiracies, gain every advantage to betray the plot. They have faith that because a prince is hated his people will rally behind the conspirators’ cries. They rely on outside intervention that inevitably forsakes them. Seen in this light, avoiding poison is not a miscellaneous tip but part of a larger effort to increase self-reliance. Independence pays on both sides of the fence. Princes who depend on too much lose their states. Friends cannot always be counted on, allies will not always rush to your aid, exposing a conspiracy does not eliminate it, and possessing the people’s good will does not shield you from overthrow. All of which leads to a very debatable or ironic Machiavellian conclusion: God helps those who help themselves.

Appendix 1: Case Overviews

The Duke of Athens Conspiracy (Florence)

Strategically Successful? Yes
Tactically Successful? No
of Primary Targets? 1
of Conspirators? Many
Conspiracy Exposed? Yes
Is the Prince Hated? Yes
Does Prince have Good Friends? No
Does Prince have Good Arms? No
Are Conspirators Deceived? No
Is the Plan Changed? Unclear
Are Conspirators' Spirits Lacking? No
Against Prince or Fatherland? Prince
Prior Conspiracy Experience? No
Poison Used? No

Ciompi Conspiracy (Florence)

Strategically Successful? Yes
Tactically Successful? Yes
of Primary Targets? Unknown
of Conspirators? Many
Conspiracy Exposed? Yes
Is the Prince Hated? No
Does Prince have Good Friends? No
Does Prince have Good Arms? No
Are Conspirators Deceived? No
Is the Plan Changed? Unclear
Are Conspirators' Spirits Lacking? No
Against Prince or Fatherland? Present Government
Prior Conspiracy Experience? No
Poison Used? No

Maso Degli Albizzi Conspiracy (Florence)

Strategically Successful? No
Tactically Successful? No
of Primary Targets? 1

of Conspirators? Few
Conspiracy Exposed? No
Is the Prince Hated? Yes (NM says people “malcontent”)
Does Prince have Good Friends? Unclear
Does Prince have Good Arms? Yes
Are Conspirators Deceived? Yes (misjudge spirit of the people, who were enslaved)
Is the Plan Changed? Yes (kill others in lieu of Albizzi)
Are Conspirators’ Spirits Lacking? No
Against Prince or Fatherland? Unclear
Prior Conspiracy Experience? No
Poison Used? No

Florentine Revolution Conspiracy (Florence)

Strategically Successful? No
Tactically Successful? No
of Primary Targets? Many
of Conspirators? Many
Conspiracy Exposed? Yes
Is the Prince Hated? Unclear
Does Prince have Good Friends? Yes
Does Prince have Good Arms? Yes
Are Conspirators Deceived? Unclear
Is the Plan Changed? Plan not executed
Are Conspirators’ Spirits Lacking? Yes (“all others became frightened and fled”)
Against Prince or Fatherland? Unclear
Prior Conspiracy Experience? No
Poison Used? No

Pagolo Conspiracy (Lucca)

Strategically Successful? Yes
Tactically Successful? Yes
of Primary Targets? 1
of Conspirators? 40 (few)
Conspiracy Exposed? No
Is the Prince Hated? Yes (NM calls him “tyrant”)
Does Prince have Good Friends? No
Does Prince have Good Arms? No
Are Conspirators Deceived? No
Is the Plan Changed? No
Are Conspirators’ Spirits Lacking? No
Against Prince or Fatherland? Prince
Prior Conspiracy Experience? No

Poison Used? No

Cosimo de' Medici Conspiracy (Florence)

Strategically Successful? Yes (qualified success, only long enough to take control of government)

Tactically Successful? Yes

of Primary Targets? 1

of Conspirators? Many

Conspiracy Exposed? No

Is the Prince Hated? No

Does Prince have Good Friends? Yes

Does Prince have Good Arms? No

Are Conspirators Deceived? Yes (NM portrays them as unwise and short-lived in success)

Is the Plan Changed? No

Are Conspirators' Spirits Lacking? No

Against Prince or Fatherland? Prince

Prior Conspiracy Experience? No

Poison Used? No

Rinaldo Conspiracy (Florence)

Strategically Successful? Yes (again qualified, later problems emerge from this)

Tactically Successful? Yes

of Primary Targets? 1

of Conspirators? Many

Conspiracy Exposed? No

Is the Prince Hated? Yes

Does Prince have Good Friends? No

Does Prince have Good Arms? No

Are Conspirators Deceived? No (but err after conspiracy in banishing men and wealth)

Is the Plan Changed? No

Are Conspirators' Spirits Lacking? No

Against Prince or Fatherland? Prince

Prior Conspiracy Experience? No

Poison Used? No

Erasmus Conspiracy (Genoa)

Strategically Successful? Yes

Tactically Successful? Yes

of Primary Targets? Unclear (1-3)

of Conspirators? Few
Conspiracy Exposed? No
Is the Prince Hated? Yes
Does Prince have Good Friends? Yes
Does Prince have Good Arms? No
Are Conspirators Deceived? No (very prudent actually)
Is the Plan Changed? No
Are Conspirators' Spirits Lacking? No
Against Prince or Fatherland? Prince
Prior Conspiracy Experience? No
Poison Used? No

Bartolommeo di Senso Conspiracy (Cortona)

Strategically Successful? No
Tactically Successful? No
of Primary Targets? 1
of Conspirators? Many
Conspiracy Exposed? Yes
Is the Prince Hated? No
Does Prince have Good Friends? Yes
Does Prince have Good Arms? Yes
Are Conspirators Deceived? Unclear
Is the Plan Changed? No
Are Conspirators' Spirits Lacking? Yes
Against Prince or Fatherland? Prince
Prior Conspiracy Experience? No
Poison Used? No

Annibale Bentivoglio Conspiracy (Bologna)

Strategically Successful? No
Tactically Successful? Yes
of Primary Targets? 1
of Conspirators? Few
Conspiracy Exposed? No
Is the Prince Hated? No
Does Prince have Good Friends? Yes
Does Prince have Good Arms? Yes
Are Conspirators Deceived? Yes (about his power to start tumult and reinforcement of duke)
Is the Plan Changed? No

Are Conspirators' Spirits Lacking? No
Against Prince or Fatherland? Prince
Prior Conspiracy Experience? No
Poison Used? No

Piero de' Medici Conspiracy (Florence)

Strategically Successful? No
Tactically Successful? No
of Primary Targets? 1
of Conspirators? Many
Conspiracy Exposed? Yes
Is the Prince Hated? Yes (for collecting debts mercilessly)
Does Prince have Good Friends? No (they are ambivalent, both for and against him)
Does Prince have Good Arms? Yes
Are Conspirators Deceived? Yes (misjudged the multitude)
Is the Plan Changed? Yes
Are Conspirators' Spirits Lacking? No
Against Prince or Fatherland? Prince
Prior Conspiracy Experience? No
Poison Used? No

Cesare Petrucci Conspiracy (Prato)

Strategically Successful? No
Tactically Successful? Yes (has the power to execute Petrucci, his failings fall elsewhere)
of Primary Targets? 1
of Conspirators? Few
Conspiracy Exposed? No
Is the Prince Hated? No
Does Prince have Good Friends? No (response in Prato rallies around governmental form, not Petrucci)
Does Prince have Good Arms? Yes
Are Conspirators Deceived? Yes (they are very stupid)
Is the Plan Changed? Yes
Are Conspirators' Spirits Lacking? No
Against Prince or Fatherland? Prince (ostensibly fatherland)
Prior Conspiracy Experience? No
Poison Used? No

Galeazzo Conspiracy (Milan)

Strategically Successful? No
Tactically Successful? Yes
of Primary Targets? 1
of Conspirators? Few
Conspiracy Exposed? No
Is the Prince Hated? Yes
Does Prince have Good Friends? Yes
Does Prince have Good Arms? Unclear (probably yes)
Are Conspirators Deceived? No (though they do not make tumult public)
Is the Plan Changed? No
Are Conspirators' Spirits Lacking? No
Against Prince or Fatherland? Fatherland
Prior Conspiracy Experience? No
Poison Used? No

Pazzi Conspiracy (Florence)

Strategically Successful? No
Tactically Successful? No (partial success)
of Primary Targets? 2
of Conspirators? Many
Conspiracy Exposed? No (but there are suspicions)
Is the Prince Hated? No
Does Prince have Good Friends? Yes
Does Prince have Good Arms? Yes
Are Conspirators Deceived? Yes (NM reveals they make many misjudgments)
Is the Plan Changed? Yes
Are Conspirators' Spirits Lacking? Yes (one bows out because of reverence for church)
Against Prince or Fatherland? Prince (ostensibly fatherland)
Prior Conspiracy Experience? No
Poison Used? No

Count Girolamo Conspiracy (Forli)

Strategically Successful? No
Tactically Successful? Yes
of Primary Targets? 1
of Conspirators? 1
Conspiracy Exposed? No
Is the Prince Hated? Yes
Does Prince have Good Friends? Yes (Countess' Uncle)
Does Prince have Good Arms? Yes
Are Conspirators Deceived? Yes (allow Countess to escape)

Is the Plan Changed? No
 Are Conspirators' Spirits Lacking? Yes (do weak job; flee)
 Against Prince or Fatherland? Prince (ostensibly fatherland)
 Prior Conspiracy Experience? No
 Poison Used? No

Galeatto Conspiracy (Faenza)

Strategically Successful? Yes
 Tactically Successful? Yes
 # of Primary Targets? 1
 # of Conspirators? Few
 Conspiracy Exposed? No
 Is the Prince Hated? No
 Does Prince have Good Friends? Unclear
 Does Prince have Good Arms? Unclear
 Are Conspirators Deceived? Unclear
 Is the Plan Changed? No
 Are Conspirators' Spirits Lacking? No
 Against Prince or Fatherland? Prince
 Prior Conspiracy Experience? No
 Poison Used? No

Appendix 2:

Compilation and Breakdown of Conspiracies by Characteristic

Tactical Success:

	Success	Failure
Tactical Success	6	4
Tactical Failure	1	5

Number of Targets:

Omitted: Ciompi, Erasmo.

	Success	Failure
One	5	7
> 1	0	2

Number of Conspirators:

	Success	Failure
Few	3	5
Many	4	4

Exposed:

	Success	Failure
Not Exposed	5	6
Exposed	2	3

Hatred Towards Prince:

Omitted: Florentine

Revolution.

	Success	Failure
Prince Hated	4	4
Not Hated	3	4

Does the Prince have Good Friends:

Omitted: Albizzi, Galeatto.

	Success	Failure
Good Friends	2	6
No Good Friends	4	2

Does the Prince have Good Arms:

Omitted: Galeazzo.

	Success	Failure
Yes	0	8
No	7	0

Are the Conspirators Deceived:

Omitted: Florentine Revolution, Bartolommeo di Senso, Galeatto.

	Success	Failure
No	5	1
Yes	1	6

Is the Plan Changed:

Omitted: Duke of Athens, Ciompi, Florentine Revolution.

	Success	Failure
No	5	4
Yes	0	4

Spirit of Conspirators:

	Success	Failure
Good Spirit	7	5
Spirit Lacking	0	4

Experience:

	Success	Failure
Some	0	0
None	7	9

Poison:

	Success	Failure
Used	0	0
Not Used	7	9