



# Machiavelli's Impact on the Modern Leadership Discourse and Alternative Perspectives from Islamic Siyasatnama Tradition Al-Shayzari's Political Strategies

Semih Ceyhan

**Abstract:** This study aims for comparing the Western and Islamic roots of leadership in political history. In this respect, it presents a comparative content analysis of *the Prince* by Machiavelli and *Political Strategies* by al-Shayzari, a 12th century Muslim scholar. Although there are similarities in some respects, there are still significant differences between their leadership discourses. While Machiavelli places the leaders' interest as the highest priority, al-Shayzari places greatest importance to societal wellbeing and morality. Modern Western leadership discourse seems to borrow many concepts from Machiavelli, and interprets them with a capitalist perspective, leading to distorted managerial & economic perspectives overemphasizing profit maximization. This so-called "Machiavellian" focus is subject to criticism for undervaluing societal wellbeing. This article provides a comparative study by exploring a historical Islamic treatise which can provide challenging managerial and economic perspectives.

**Keywords:** Islamic management, leadership, Machiavelli, agency theory, siyasatnama, Islamic economics.

**JEL Classification:** M1, M10

@ Asst. Prof., Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, ceyhansemih@gmail.com,  0000-0001-5721-6855



© Research Center for Islamic Economics  
DOI: 10.26414/A3874  
TUJISE, x(x), 202x, xx-xx  
tujise.org



Submitted: 29.04.2022  
Revised: 27.07.2022  
Accepted: 29.07.2022  
Online First: .01.09.2022



## Introduction

In the historical political treatise literature, works can be categorized in two ways: idealist and realist approaches (Elmalı, 2003). While idealist approaches contain normative advice for leaders on how governance should be ideally; realist approaches underline the importance of power relations to establish authority over other groups (Elmalı, 2003). There have been “idealist” approaches which can be seen in most of the political treatises, both in European and Islamic history. Beginning from the ideal “Republic” of Plato, there are many instances of Utopic definitions of governing (Utopia – Thomas More, The Book of the Courtier - Baldassare Castiglione, The City of the Sun - Tommaso Campanella, New Atlantis – Francis Bacon). Similarly, Islamic political history made idealist definitions of government (Farabi’s al- Madinah al-Fadilah). There is also a siyosatnama tradition, where authors make suggestions on how to govern a state and how to be successful (Ceyhan & Barca, 2021b).

Machiavelli was different and claimed to be the first and the most important realistic example of giving advice on how to beat rivals and ensure the authority (Calhoun, 1969; Elmalı, 2003; Jackson & Grace, 2013). In this article, we want to compare this so-called “realistic” perspective with another so-called “idealistic” Islamic political treatise (siyosatnama) of al-Shayzari (d. 12<sup>th</sup> century). We are in search for their managerial and economic perspectives and their similarities and differences. We try to answer the questions of how this two important historical works (one from Western, one from Islamic world) approached to leadership and how similar they are to modern understandings.

This article focuses on two pioneer works: Machiavelli’s *the Prince* and al-Shayzari’s *Political Strategies*. In the following sections, we first give brief information on the two books and move on to the academic discussions in the management literature around Machiavelli, and his impact on modern leadership discourse. Then we introduce al-Shayzari and Machiavelli in a comparative way. After pointing out the similarities and differences found in the content analysis of the two books, we finalize with al-Shayzari’s potential impacts on the knowledge of modern management.

### al-Shayzari, Political Strategies

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Sultan Saladin won Jerusalem back from the Crusaders, which was a very impactful victory on the Islamic world. Al-Shayzari, as an important Muslim scholar, judge, and poet of the time, wrote his siyosatnama called *Nahj*

*al-suluk fi siyasat al-muluk'* (Political Strategies). His book was presented to Saladin and later became a pioneer work for other siyasatnama authors (Dinçer, 2018). This book is important in terms of offering managerial/administrative suggestions to the leaders, as well as war strategies. Al-Shayzari gives his experiences on how to deal with enemies, soldiers and people, and he provides important implications for modern leadership.

## Machiavelli, the Prince and impacts on Modern Management

*"...the fascination of The Prince comes from the fact that Machiavelli did not describe how government should work but how it actually works."*

**(Cunha et al., 2013)**

For almost 550 years, *the Prince of Niccolo* by Machiavelli has been one of the most influential books on management (Hartley, 2006). He is one of the most influential writers on strategic thinking, power, and authority relations and the first author who tried to legitimize sovereign power or action without referring to theology but relating these to princes' interests (McKinlay & Pezet, 2018). In addition to political administration, his suggestions on leadership was considered relevant to modern business, as well. Without doubt, power plays an important role in modern corporate life (Galie & Bopst, 2006). His tactics were sound, based on realistic knowledge of behavior and his ploys were adopted by many leaders to acquire power, resist aggression and control subordinates (Calhoon, 1969). His reasoning was practical and pragmatic rather than philosophical, so today's world acknowledge Machiavellianism as employing aggressive, manipulative, devious moves to achieve objectives (Calhoon, 1969). Hartley (2006) even claimed that guru names in the management history such as Fayol, Weber, McGregor, Taylor, Mayo, Barnard, McClelland and Greenleaf were all containing Machiavellian impacts. Not only in the Western world, but also in other parts of the world, the management principles associated with him were appraised (e.g. its impact on Indian managers (Cyriac & Dharmaraj, 1994)).

His work has generally been associated with ruthlessness, oppression and amorality (Cosans & Reina, 2018). Modern organizational behavior studies even adopted a Mach IV scale in order to measure antisocial personality tendency called Machiavellianism (Christie & Geis, 1970). They considered Machiavellianism as a dark triad and associated it with not believing in people's goodness and legitimizing exploitation and oppression if one could get away with it (Cosans & Reina, 2018). Machiavellian perspective denies that effectiveness and ethical goodness

are not likely to go together (Levine & Boaks, 2014). According to this perspective, a leader must do whatever *needs to be done* (Cunha et al., 2013). It incorporates the ideas of manipulation and deceitful behaviors when they are necessary (Kessler et al., 2010). Therefore, *the Prince* was acknowledged as the source of a different leadership thinking, based on an unpleasant but realistic perspective which was considered as more helpful to achieve success. Main motto of this perspective was “ends justify the means” (Cosans & Reina, 2018).

Machiavelli’s lasting impact on modern business is thought to be because “*he had scorn for outdated, preconceived notions and for any unrealistic approach (moralistic or what). His reasoning was pragmatic and practical rather than philosophical.*” (Calhoon, 1969) (p.208) Calhoon even named him as “the first modern man”. He was *scientific* (logical, objective analysis), he made his observations following a critical incident approach in laboratory conditions (16<sup>th</sup> century Italy).

Yet many modern scholars claim that it is very simplistic to reduce all his philosophy to these negative characters (Cosans & Reina, 2018; Harris, 2010) and leading misunderstandings about his suggestions (Rochet, 2008). They claim that Machiavelli, only under inevitable circumstances, let princes engage in amoral actions to prevent further worse consequences. There are studies claiming that Machiavelli’s original ideas on leadership are not so far removed from those preached by Hunter’s servant leadership, with the emphasis on the necessity of being loved by people (Fernando & Barbato, 2016).

Many scholars thought that Machiavellianism is unrelated to the real works of Machiavelli (Cunha et al., 2013; Jackson & Grace, 2016; Rochet, 2008). Mythical Machiavelli figurative is not related to real Machiavelli in the history. His works are claimed to be distorted from their original purposes and perspectives (Jackson & Grace, 2016). Jackson & Grace (2016) analyzed the most items of the Machiavellianism scale and illustrated that most did not have any basis in Machiavelli’s works. The original discussions in *the Prince* are claimed to be less evil than the modern caricatured version Machiavellianism which implies practicing ruthless manipulation in corporations (Boddy, 2011).

Galie and Bopst (2006) worked on six corporate manuals that tried to engage Machiavellian thought with the modern corporate management and claimed that they misunderstood Machiavelli and fail to acknowledge his actual teachings. Furthermore, they claimed there is a transferability risk from 16<sup>th</sup> century political leadership to 21<sup>st</sup> century corporate governance.

In order to contribute to these debates, we want to make a comparison of Machiavelli’s ideas on leadership strategies with other historical sources of political

thought from alternate contexts. We want to see the differentiation level of Machiavelli's suggestions on leadership from other works which emerged in different cultures. In this respect, we want to focus on a particular political treatise emerged in Islamic history. Al-Shayzari's work called *Political Strategies* is a masterpiece and a popular example of the Eastern political treatise tradition. This work is a part of *Siyasatnamas*, a well-established tradition dating back to 7<sup>th</sup> century. In Islamic political thought; scholars, viziers, or consultants had written suggestion books for sultans. Ceyhan & Barca, (2021) illustrated that these books carried out some dominant management logics that could make important implications to modern management. Al-Shayzari dedicated his work to famous Saladin Ayyubi (12<sup>th</sup> century) and his work shows some parallels to the Machiavelli's practical suggestions, which then turned into practical for modern management, as well. In this way, we will be able to see how different his ideas/suggestions are from his contemporaneous Muslim scholars' suggestions.

Similarity between Machiavellian and Islamic political thought is not an unknown area; there are studies discussing the roots of *the Prince*, which was highly under the effect of the Arabic translation of Aristotle's *Secretum Secretorum (Kitāb sirr al-asrār)* (Biasiori, 2018).

Machiavelli and Islamic political thinkers often appear as being very similar: not only did they face the same problems, but they also looked at them through the same lenses (Biasiori, 2018).

## Leadership Perspectives of Machiavelli and al-Shayzari

Comparing the leadership perspectives of these two traditions and pointing out their similarities and differences would contribute to our understanding on historical development of leadership thinking in the East and the West. In this paper, we have initiated a comparative analysis between two important political figures in the West and the East. Without doubt, Machiavelli and his work *the Prince* have had an important effect on the Western understanding of power and authority relations. In the context *the Prince* is written, Machiavelli was trying to show how to have a political union in a divided Italy, therefore most of his suggestions were on how to capture a new land and establish authority over the people.

Al-Shayzari's pioneer work *Political Strategies* is also a masterpiece and a popular example of the Eastern political treatise (siyasatnama) tradition. Although their contextual situations are different from each other, both lived in Middle Ages and witnessed to the clashes between the West & the East (Christianity and Is-

lam). We know that both European and Muslim scholars were aware of the works of each other. There is strong evidence of the mutual interaction between these two cultures throughout the history (Biasiori & Marocci, 2018). Beginning from the emergence of Islam (7<sup>th</sup> century), Muslim scholars put a considerable effort to translate and interpret Greek scholars; in addition, in the Middle Ages, Western scholars were affected by the works of Muslim scholars (Ghazanfar, 2003). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that there is some sort of similarity between the leadership understandings of Machiavelli and al-Shayzari. In this manner, comparing their fundamental leadership logics could be fruitful. In the following sections, we will first mention the similar leadership discourses in both works and then move on to the differences.

## Similarities

Both authors had the target readers of leaders (sultans, kings) and focused on some necessary competencies for leaders. When we compare the authors' leadership understandings, we can see that they had both given importance to respective fundamental concepts, which are still important in modern leadership and management theories:

- (i) visionary thinking
- (ii) precaution
- (iii) Internal Harmony / Support of subjects

## Visionary Thinking

According to al-Shayzari, reason ('aql) is one of the most important traits a leader must have. This is because a man can distinguish between right and wrong through reason. Al-Shayzari approached to mind as a useful tool to understand the environmental conditions:

Mind uses the experience to analyze and evaluate the causes and consequences of the changing states of the world (al-Shayzari, p. 100).

With the help of reason, one can know what is permissible (*jaiz*) and not so that he can provide sensitive criteria and common sense on the administration. Al-Shayzari also related the mind with foresight and vision and accuracy on predicting future events.

When some people of wisdom are asked about the reason, they said: Reason is making right judgements with a subtle point of view and to know what will happen in the future by making examinations and comparisons on what has occurred (al-Shayzari, p. 100).

The ignorant looks at something with his eyes, the wise looks with his heart. That is, the ignorant sees everything outwardly, while the wise thinks, judges, and understands with its background (al-Shayzari, p. 137).

Machiavelli also highlighted the importance of visionary thinking, making plans for the future by taking possible future incidents into consideration.

But the poor judgement of men will begin something that seems good at the outset without noticing the poison concealed underneath, as I said earlier in connection with consumptive fevers (Machiavelli, p. 49).

anyone who does not diagnose the ills when they arise in a principality is not really wise, and this talent is given to few men (Machiavelli, p. 49).

He used the concept of prudence as an important competence of leaders to diagnose the problems beforehand and take necessary strategic decisions.

For the Romans did in these instances what all wise princes must do: they must be on their guard not only against existing dangers but also against future disturbances, and try diligently to prevent them. Once evils are recognized ahead of time, they may be easily cured; but if you wait for them to come upon you, the medicine will be too late, because the disease will have become incurable. ... The same thing occurs in affairs of state; by recognizing evils in advance (a gift granted only to the prudent ruler), they can be cured quickly; but when they are not recognized and are left to grow to such an extent that everyone recognizes them, there is no longer any remedy (p. 12).

Machiavelli suggested not to let things slide, but to intervene them with vision and virtue; "...they reaped the benefits of their virtue and prudence; for time brings with it all things, and it can bring with it the good as well as the evil, and the evil as well as the good." (p. 13)

For both authors, predicting the future was an important strategic power to better understand the essence of the matters. It was highlighted in order to take necessary pre-cautions against possible threats. Therefore, first common characteristics of their leadership understanding was common: being visionary (foresighted), which was possible through a mature mind (according to al-Shayzari).

## **Precaution – to be prepared to threats**

Being precautionary was very central in the leadership traits suggested by both authors. Considering the contextual political factors of their times (political imbalance in 15<sup>th</sup> century Italy, endless wars between Crusades and Muslim armies), they were all overemphasizing the importance of being careful about threats.

Al-Shayzari highlighted the importance of logistic preparation in wars, he suggested checking the horses, weapons, and other war instruments. They should be carefully selected, and an army should have no problems in terms of logistics during the fight.

Before the soldiers move, attention must be paid to the horses they will ride. There should be no small, very old, crippled, and sick animals among horses that cannot fight, which is a weakness for warriors. Because, at the time of war with enemies, horse is one of the things that will give fear to the enemy in every respect (al-Shayzari, p. 239).

According to Machiavelli, a ruler must always be prepared for war, even in peace times. Preparation for war was very crucial for success and survival. This was possible through physical exercise and mental study, and this would increase the knowledge and experience of the leader on environmental conditions.

He should, therefore, never take his mind from this exercise of war, and in peacetime he must train himself more than in time of war. This can be done in two ways: first, through physical exercise; second, by study. Such knowledge is useful in two ways: first, one learns to know one's own country and can better understand how to defend it; second, with the knowledge and experience of these terrains, one can easily comprehend the characteristics of any other site that it is necessary to explore for the first time. The hills, valleys, plains, rivers, and swamps of Tuscany, for example, have certain similarities to those of other territories, so that by knowing the lie of the land in one territory, one can easily come to know it in others. A prince who lacks this expertise lacks the most important quality in a commander, because it teaches you to find the enemy, choose a campsite, lead troops, organize them for battles, and besiege towns to your own advantage (Machiavelli, p. 51).

In modern sense, these suggestions remind us of training and experience of human resources. By physical exercise, workers should increase their knowledge and skills on their jobs. Similarly, by knowing the external environmental conditions better, a leader would adjust his strategic plans and operations. Therefore, a manager should establish a consistency between internal skills of the company and competitive requirements of the external environment. If he has the required level of knowledge and expertise, he can be successful.

Al-Shayzari also suggested to be “prepared at all times against things that you may suddenly encounter” (p. 171). According to him, before doing something, a sultan must prepare and then make his decisions. For him, it was necessary to protect soldiers from the enemies’ ambushes or attacks. This could be done through taking necessary precautions.

For both authors, during peacetimes leaders must not lose concentration on their preparations against their enemies. In addition, the important emphasis was made on preventing threats/risks before they occurred:

For the Romans did in these instances what all wise princes must do: they must be on their guard not only against existing dangers but also against future disturbances and try diligently to prevent them. Once evils are recognized ahead of time, they may be easily cured; but if you wait for them to come upon you, the medicine will be too late, because the disease will have become incurable (Machiavelli, p. 12).

Tabari said: A person who defends after an event occurs is not called smart. The real smart person is the one who seeks a solution before the event occurs. It is necessary to think of a solution before the events occur (al-Shayzari, p. 102).

The precaution taken after an event has taken place is of no use (al-Shayzari, p. 212).

### **Internal Harmony of Human Resources**

According to al-Shayzari, the internal harmony of the army was a strategically important factor for success. He suggested investigating the soldiers about whether there are any separatists who attempted to discourage the soldiers, and searching for the spies working for the enemy, and catching them. In this suggestion, an important leadership trait is evident: taking precautions against possible threats from the internal environment. Sometimes, enemies can make deals with agent provocateurs who try to demotivate the soldiers. Threats are not only limited to the external environment, or direct rivalry, but sometimes spies or hypocrites who pretend to be loyal but work for the enemy could be very harmful. In order not to be misled, a leader was suggested to be precautionary against these kinds of threats. In managerial terms, scanning the internal environment for possible threats (e.g. rivals’ intervention to the internal businesses or operations) stemming from outside the company is very important. Al-Shayzari underlined the importance of monitoring the internal and external environment for possible threats and getting prepared against them.

While writing on civil principalities, Machiavelli also acknowledged the importance of having the support of people. This can be achieved by not oppressing

them. When they are treated well, they will be more loyal to the prince. Therefore, he suggested to gain friendship of the people, “otherwise he will have no support in times of adversity”. (p.36)

Machiavelli, as well, was aware of the risk of external manipulative interventions to internal environment.

For a prince should have two fears: one internal, concerning his subjects; the other external, concerning foreign powers. From the latter, he can defend himself by his effective arms and his effective allies, and he will always have effective allies if he has effective arms. Internal affairs will always be stable when external affairs are stable, provided that they are not already disturbed by a conspiracy (Machiavelli, p. 63).

He suggested that princes should avoid situations that make them hated and contemptible. Ensuring the love of the subjects would protect the prince from conspiracies.

The prince will protect himself against this danger by avoiding being either hated or despised and by keeping the people satisfied with him. It is essential to do this, as was discussed at length earlier. One of the most powerful remedies a prince has against conspiracies is not to be hated by the people, for whoever plans a conspiracy always believes that he will satisfy the people by killing the prince (Machiavelli, p. 63).

Similarly, al-Shayzari also suggested not to punish soldiers during the war. This was considered important, because when a leader rushes to punish these opposers during the war, it could create more problems such as separation and conflicts between soldiers.

Before dealing with the rivals, therefore, a leader must ensure the internal harmony, consistency and unity of his people. In strategic management terms, al-Shayzari and Machiavelli both suggested that the internal strength must be ensured to be successful against rivals. Therefore, competitive advantage could be obtained based on a powerful internal consistency among human resources.

## Differences

Considering the aforementioned three concepts, we believe they share very similar perspectives. However, in other aspects, differences are more evident. While Machiavelli had a more pragmatist perspective, al-Shayzari's perspective is shaped more with moral values. Here, we analyze two main concepts:

- (i) deception
- (ii) consultancy & leadership

## Deception

Probably the most criticized aspect of Machiavelli is his suggestions on cunning and manipulation. Machiavelli suggested “...cunning to manipulate men’s mind...” (p. 60) and “...a wise ruler therefore, cannot and should not keep his word when such an observance would be to his disadvantage, and when the reasons that caused him to make a promise are removed.” (p. 60). However, he underlined the fact that it must be caused by necessity, otherwise “he should not depart from good” (p. 61).

And, as I said above, he should not depart from the good if it is possible to do so, but he should know how to enter into evil when forced by necessity (Machiavelli, p. 61).

Nevertheless, for the purpose of maintaining the state, according to him, a ruler can act against his faith, humanity, and religion. He claimed that it was enough to be seen as merciful, faithful, fair, humanist, and religious in the eyes of the subject rather than actually being so. This hypocrisy is one of the most debated aspects of Machiavelli, while some regard this as a realistic approach, moralists opposed that as being evil.

By using the metaphor of lion and fox, he suggested a leader must be like a lion, from which the enemies are afraid of, and at the same time must be like a cunning fox, which can understand the traps of the enemies and take necessary precautions against them:

...he should choose from among the beasts the fox and the lion; for the lion cannot defend itself from traps, while the fox cannot protect itself from the wolves. It is therefore necessary to be a fox, in order to recognize the traps, and a lion, in order to frighten the wolves: those who base their behavior only on the lion do not understand things (Machiavelli, p.60).

Al-Shayzari also praised courage against enemies and argued that a ruler must have this competency. Even if he were not courageous “he should pretend to be” (p. 103), which is similar to Machiavelli’s idea. Yet, courage alone is not enough according to him, “It is very necessary to take some precautions and make smart plans before meeting the enemy” (p. 103) he says, and he gives reference to one of the famous hadiths (the prophet Muhammad’s (pbuh) sayings): “*War is hud’a (deception)*”<sup>1</sup>. Deception was considered as a war strategy in al-Shayzari’s book, as

1 Buhari, “Cihad”, 157, “Menakıb”, 65, “İstıtabe”, 6; Müslim, “Zekat”, 153, “Cihad”, 18, 19; Ebu Davud, “Cihad”, 96, “Sünne”, 28; Tirmizi, “Cihad”, 5; İbn Mace, “Cihad”, 28; Darimi, “Siyer”, 13; Ahmed b. Hanbel, Müsned, I, 81, 90, 113, 126, 131, 134,11, 316, 314, III, 224, 297, 308, VI, 387

well as in Islam. It was permissible for commanders to use ruse and bluff, tactical and strategical deceptions (Hayward, 2017) to win the battle. However, Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) only allowed the practice of *hud'a* (deception) under warfare conditions, and never tolerated deception in other aspects of life (Acar, 2019). Similarly, al-Shayzari also limits using it against enemies; for instance, while dealing with rebellion of the subjects, he forbade to deceive them.

Hud'a (*deception*) was accepted to prevent aggressive rivalry, it was considered better to confuse and delude the enemies and beat them instead of causing losses and deaths in both sides. In modern management terms, it can be seen as avoiding direct competition. However, Machiavelli's understanding of deception is differently represented in the management field leading to an immoral notion that a desirable end justifies any means.

### **Consultancy & Leadership**

Machiavelli and al-Shayzari had both centered the leaders in their writings, they both aimed to help them become successful and prioritize their interests. Yet, Machiavelli were more stick to the absoluteness of the prince's authority. We can observe that in their different perspectives on decision making. They both stated that a leader should listen to others' opinions before deciding, and they also shared the idea that consultants should be virtuous, experienced, and wise. However, Machiavelli strongly opposed to anything that could damage the authority of prince, so he suggested listening to consultants but making the final decision by himself. He stressed that the source of good advice must stem from the prudence of the prince. He had prioritized the authority and success of the prince with this notion, because his suggestions were serving to the prince's interests. Therefore, he tended to reject any counsellors as the source of good advice and approached them as suspicion that can harm the prince. So, according to him, the source of good decisions was the prudence of the prince, bright ideas of the wise men were useless unless there was a good prince who can utilize these. Along with that, consultation must not unsettle the authority of the prince.

Al-Shayzari had a different perspective, he put so much importance on consultation and even suggested "making mistakes in consultation with someone else is more praised than finding the right opinion without being consulted." (p.180). He thought that a sultan should not make any decisions by himself, even if he knew it better than anyone. Al-Shayzari praises consultancy so much that he does not give importance to its result. Al-Shayzari's perspective is also based on Islamic thought, which considers leadership as a sort of responsibility towards God and society. This

notion limits the role of a leader for serving for the good of people, rather than maximizing his self-interest (Ceyhan & Barca, 2021a). However, Machiavelli's perspective insists on the interests of the leader, even if it costs to the people's wellbeing.

**Table 1**

*Summary of the Comparison between Machiavelli and al-Shayzari*

	Machiavelli	Al-Shayzari
Visionary thought	Diagnosing the problems beforehand is prudence and necessary	Having foresight is considered as a leadership competency
Precaution	A ruler must always be prepared for war, even in peace times.	Sultans should be prepared at all times against things that they may suddenly encounter
Internal Harmony of Human Resources	Princes should avoid situations that make them hated and contemptible & gain friendship of people.	Sultans should investigate the soldiers and take precautions against possible threats from the internal environment.
Deception	Lion and fox example... Cunningly manipulating people and enemies is acceptable when necessary.	Deception is accepted as a way of avoiding worse outcomes.
Consultancy	Prince's absolute authority on decision making should not be damaged by consultancy.	Consulting to others is given too much importance. It is even more important than the accuracy of the decision.
Leader	Authority must be established at any cost.	Leaders have a societal responsibility, which is more important than their self-interests.

## Discussion

Although there are many similarities on the practical suggestions on leadership traits (like having visionary thinking, taking precautions, ensuring internal harmony), Machiavelli and al-Shayzari had different perspectives on the essence of leadership. First difference is apparent on their ultimate aims by providing suggestions to leaders. These are seemingly close to each other, to beat their enemies and to become a successful leader. However, there is a fundamental difference in their philosophies.

While Machiavelli's ultimate aim is to help a leader on establishing and maintaining authority at any expense; al-Shayzari's ultimate aim includes ensuring jus-

tice among people through establishing a fair and moral authority. While Machiavelli practically illustrated the ways of having authority over other people and rivals, his suggestions were for establishing the authority. Al-Shayzari had gone one step further and reminded the religious responsibilities of leaders before God, therefore his suggestions were more shaped by religious considerations and morality.

These perspective differences shaped their leadership understanding and then their practical advice. They both underlined the importance of key leadership traits: vision, precaution, human resources, information, consultation etc., but while Machiavelli had the notion that ends can justify the means; al-Shayzari did not accept these and put religious legitimacy boundaries for managerial actions. According to Machiavelli, being virtuous, moral, and noble are meaningless unless a prince becomes successful. Because of this understanding, he had a different perspective on the leaders' virtues such as generosity, justice, and keeping words. Engaging in virtuous activities just to have a good perception in the eyes of people is not a good strategy for him. Thus, he suggested to break a promise, oppress people, being miser if they were necessary to maintain the authority. Al-Shayzari, on the other hand, even suggested not to obey the sultans' orders if they are contradicting with Islamic principles. He also acknowledged the importance of maintaining the authority and give many advices to do so, but he believed that there should be a moral limit that restricted the sultans to do whatever they want to do. Thus, we can claim that while Machiavelli was result-oriented, al-Shayzari had a process orientation emphasizing morality. Since the ultimate aims were different, Machiavelli tolerated misconducts and immoral behavior for reaching success, but al-Shayzari suggested sticking to moral rules to be successful in the long-run. These results are also in line with previous works on Islamic *siyasatnamas'* management perspectives (Ceyhan & Barca, 2021a, 2021b).

Our comparison also provides implications for agency theory in economics. The main reason of agency problem is claimed to be conflicting interests of principals and agents. Principals are considered responsible to make sure that agents work for their economic interests, while agents are considered to be responsible to protect principals' economic interests. However, since each actor is also considered as working for maximizing their self-economic interests, agency problem occurs (Donaldson & Davis, 1991; Fama, 1980; Jensen, 1994; Ross, 1973). It can be claimed that Agency Theory acknowledge organizational actors' relations in a Machiavellian manner. Adverse selection, moral hazard and opportunism of agents are accepted as Machiavellist behaviors, because agents want to maximize their

own interests/profits and may not act in the best interest of principals (Arrow, 1985; Fama, 1980; Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Ross, 1973). Modern agency perspective lacks the ability to handle multiple interests from stakeholders, mere economics-based perspective prevents understanding of different stakeholder-relationships and values (Bendickson et al., 2016). Rather than the classical economical understanding of organizational actors maximizing their self-interests (Perrow, 1986); there is a need of taking societal impacts of organizational actions into consideration. Organizational actors are claimed to not only pursue economic interests (e.g. profit maximization, market penetration) but non-economic ones, as well (Fontrodona & Sison, 2006). In modern Agency Theory, principals and agents are generally defined as opposed to each other, forming a dichotomy. These opposed parties however need each other, and their interests are not necessarily incompatible and diverging. From al-Shayzari's perspective, everyone is primarily considered as an agent of society. This implies that principal-agent relation at the organizational level is also a reflection of the higher-level relation with society, therefore it should not be confrontational; but shaped with the awareness of shared societal responsibility (Ceyhan & Barca, 2021a).

Agency relations in siyasatnamas are considered as an entrustment chain where principals and agents are also kept responsible towards a higher authority. In this entrustment chain, organizational actors are expected to work in accordance with God's will, which was considered equal to societal responsibilities. Neither principals nor agents can act in a Machiavellian manner. They cannot use the property of God in a way that God does not want (against society). If one acts so, the others are obliged to warn and correct. This warning is a requirement of their entrustment position towards their society.

## Future Directions and Limitations

Without a doubt, provided discourses do not represent an all-encompassing perspective but shape the contours of the leadership perspective to offer a basis for further argumentation. As in any study, we acknowledge some limitations. First, our study represents the siyasatnama literature with only one example, but there is a huge number of political treatises in the history of Islam (Ceyhan & Barca, 2021b). Future studies may bring other siyasatnamas on the desk to make further comparisons between the Eastern and the Western management perspectives. Secondly, al-Shayzari and Machiavelli's works are authentically related to political thought, but we analyzed these writings regarding their business leadership perspective, so there is a transfer of knowledge risk between these two sets of logics.

Our inferences from the books' contents are not free of mistakes. Moreover, we limit our focus with a number of leadership traits mentioned in both works, however there are further traits and leadership theories to be elaborated. Nevertheless, the perspectives provided by both authors still reveal important implications for today's management.

Additionally, there is an important discussion going on Machiavelli's real intentions of writing the Prince. Scholars claim that many of the negative attributes of Machiavelli, in reality, do not represent his original ideas (Cunha et al., 2013; Jackson & Grace, 2016). Especially for the *deception* understanding of Machiavelli, we stick to the mainstream, popular adjectives of Machiavelli: pragmatist, realistic, relentless; but accept these could be misleading. However, this is a limitation for us; it would be out of our scope/expertise to find out original intentions of Machiavelli. By giving the moral perspectives of al-Shayzari, we think that we may open a way to make a comparison and find out original intentions of Machiavelli as well for future studies.

## Conclusion

Our modern management and economics knowledge does have its roots on our history. This history has been generally represented as limited to the Western world. Machiavelli, in this respect, is an important figure for scholars, representing a capitalist Western understanding of relentless competition and maximization of leaders' interests at any expense. On the other hand, there are very few efforts on the Eastern world to look for alternative management and leadership perspectives. We believe that Islamic political treatises, *siyasatnamas*, are good starting points to present the historical Islamic roots of management understanding. Al-Shayzari's *Political Strategies* had some similarities with Machiavelli's *The Prince* regarding leadership discourse; however, there was a main difference on the emphasis on moral and societal priorities.

Moreover, today's economics perspective is generally limited to maximizing individuals' profits, utilities and self-interests. Although there are economic models suggesting equilibriums, balancing differing interests of different groups of people, in reality there are unavoidable economic and social inequalities. Vast majority of modern economic and management practices have a Machiavellian root, legitimizing use of immoral means to maximizing material gains. There is a need for more comprehensive perspectives which goes beyond the "everyone for himself" notion and establish an environment where everyone wins. Al-Shayzari's *siyasatnama*, in

this respect, provides an alternative, Islamic and moral based perspective to provide solutions to the problems of modern societies. There are many religious, indigenous, and novel perspectives in the Islamic thought that could suggest different bases on which moral, economic and leadership perspectives could be built.

## References

- Acar, C. (2019). *Hız Peygamber'in savaş stratejisi*. Emin Yayınları.
- Al-Shayzari, E. N. (2013). Nehcü's süluk fi siyaseti'l müluk, In E. Köse (Ed. & Trans.), *Siyaset Stratejileri*. Büyüyenay Yayınları (Original work published 12th century).
- Arrow, K. J. (1985). The economics of agency. In J. W. Pratt & R. J. Zeckhauser (Eds.), *Principals and agents: the structure of business*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Bendickson, J., Muldoon, J., Liguori, E., & Davis, P. E. (2016). Agency theory: the times, they are a-changin'. *Management Decision*, 54(1), 174–193. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-02-2015-0058>
- Biasiori, L. (2018). Islamic roots of Machiavelli's thought? The prince and the kitab sirr al-asrâr from Baghdad to Florence and Back. In L. Biasiori & G. Marcocci (Eds.), *Machiavelli, Islam and the East: Reorienting the foundations of modern political thought* (pp. 17–37). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Biasiori, L., & Marcocci, G. (2018). Machiavelli, Islam and the East: Reorienting the foundations of modern political thought. In *Machiavelli, Islam and the East*. Palgrave MacMillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-53949-2>
- Boddy, C. R. (2011). Corporate psychopaths compared with other dark leadership personalities. In *Corporate Psychopaths* (pp. 143–162). Palgrave Macmillan UK. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230307551\\_13](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230307551_13)
- Calhoun, R. P. (1969). Niccolo Machiavelli and the twentieth century administrator. *Academy of Management Journal*, 12(2), 205–212. <https://doi.org/10.5465/254816>
- Ceyhan, S., & Barca, M. (2021a). Agency perspective in Islamic political treatises: implications for contemporary management research. *International Journal of Emerging Markets*, ahead of print (ahead of print). <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOEM-01-2021-0103>
- Ceyhan, S., & Barca, M. (2021b). Dominant management logics of siyasetnamas – A moral management perspective. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, 18(3), 239–271. <https://doi.org/10.51327/EVUX5400>
- Christie, R., & Geis, F. L. (1970). *Studies in Machiavellianism*. Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/C2013-0-10497-7>
- Cosans, C. E., & Reina, C. S. (2018). The leadership ethics of Machiavelli's prince. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 28(3), 275–300. <https://doi.org/10.1017/beq.2017.13>
- Cunha, M. P. e., Clegg, S., & Rego, A. (2013). Lessons for leaders: Positive organization studies meets Niccolò Machiavelli. *Leadership*, 9(4), 450–465. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715012455355>
- Cyriac, K., & Dharmaraj, R. (1994). Machiavellianism in Indian management. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 13(4), 281–286. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00871674>
- Dinçer, Ö. (2018). *Siyasetnameleri yeniden okumak: Bir yönetim bilimci gözüyle geleneksel siyasi düşünce*. Klasik Publications.
- Donaldson, L., & Davis, J. H. (1991). Stewardship theory or Agency theory: CEO Governance and shareholder returns. *Australian Journal of Management*, 16(1), 49–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/031289629101600103>

- Elmalı, O. (2003). Ibn Haldun ve Machiavelli'nin realist siyaset kuramları. *EKEV Akademi Dergisi*, 15, 133–142.
- Fama, E. F. (1980). Agency problems and the theory of the firm. *Journal of Political Economy*, 88(2), 288–307.
- Fernando, L., & Barbato, T. (2016). Machiavelli and pop management literature: The world of uncertainties and invitation to organizational fantasies. *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 5(9), 16–32.
- Fontrudona, J., & Sison, A. J. G. (2006). The nature of the firm, agency theory and shareholder theory: A critique from philosophical anthropology. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 66, 33–42. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-006-9052-2>
- Galie, P. J., & Bopst, C. (2006). Machiavelli & modern business: Realist thought in contemporary corporate leadership manuals. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 65(3), 235–250. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-005-5352-1>
- Ghazanfar, S. M. (2003). *Medieval Islamic economic thought filling the “great gap” in European economics* (Shaikh M. Ghazanfar, Ed.). Routledge.
- Harris, P. (2010). Machiavelli and the global compass: Ends and means in ethics and leadership. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 93(1), 131–138. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-010-0630-y>
- Hartley, N. T. (2006). Management history: An umbrella model. *Journal of Management History*, 12(3), 278–292. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17511340610670188>
- Hayward, J. (2017). *War is deceit: An analysis of a contentious hadith on the morality of military deception*. Amman: Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre / Royal Aal al Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought.
- Jackson, M., & Grace, D. (2013). Machiavelli's echo in management. *Management & Organizational History*, 8(4), 400–414. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449359.2013.831737>
- Jackson, M., & Grace, D. (2016). Machiavelli's shadows in management, social psychology and primatology. *Theoria*, 62(142), 67–84. <https://doi.org/10.3167/th.2015.6214204>
- Jensen, M. C. (1994). Self-interest, altruism, incentives, and agency theory. *Journal of Applied Corporate Finance*, 7(2), 40–45.
- Jensen, M. C., & Meckling, H. (1976). Theory of the firm: Managerial behavior, agency costs and ownership structure. *Journal of Financial Economics*, 3, 305–360.
- Kessler, S. R., Bandelli, A. C., Spector, P. E., Borman, W. C., Nelson, C. E., & Penney, L. M. (2010). Re-examining Machiavelli: A three-dimensional model of Machiavellianism in the workplace. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 40(8), 1868–1896. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2010.00643.x>
- Levine, M. P., & Boaks, J. (2014). What does ethics have to do with Leadership? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 124(2), 225–242. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1807-y>
- Machiavelli, N. (2005). *The Prince* (P. Bondanella, Ed.). Oxford University Press.
- McKinlay, A., & Pezet, E. (2018). Foucault, governmentality, strategy: From the ear of the sovereign to the multitude. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 53, 57–68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpa.2017.03.005>
- Perrow, C. (1986). Economic theories of organization. *Theory and Society*, 15(1), 11–45.
- Rochet, C. (2008). The common good as an invisible hand: Machiavelli's legacy to public management. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 74(3), 497–521. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852308095952>
- Ross, S. A. (1973). The economic theory of agency: The principal's problem. *The American Economic Review*, 63(2), 134–139.