Martialing Machiavelli: Reassessing the Military Reflections

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In Chapter 14 of *The Prince* Machiavelli advises his protégé to "never lift thought" from the exercise of war. Yet he says in Chapter 19 that the people are now more formidable than the military and must be attended more energetically. This essay resolves what seems to be a contradiction of priorities. The resolution first requires an extraction of Machiavelli from two concepts of humanism, both of which oversimplify his reflections on war. The essay then demonstrates that Machiavelli so thoroughly integrates military and civil concerns that they become indistinguishable. To "think about the exercise of war" demands thinking about things outside conventional military affairs. Thus, rather than unsettling departures, Machiavelli's military reflections are helpful complements to his civil discourse.

In chapter 14 of *The Prince*, Machiavelli beseeches his protégé to "not have another object nor another thought, nor take any other thing for his art, outside of war and orders and disciplines of it" (Machiavelli 1960, 62 [*Prince* 14]).[1] Shortly thereafter he reiterates, "he should above all never lift thought from this exercise of war" (63 [*Prince* 14]). Distracted by Machiavelli's seemingly disparate devotions to fraud or to laws, scholars are hesitant to embrace this unambiguous recommendation to privilege warfare, often avoiding it or offering a perfunctory explanatory paragraph. Sasso (1980, 342), at least acknowledging its clarity and importance, characterizes Machiavelli's call to arms as polemical excess, and in a long cautionary footnote in his edition of *The Prince* (Machiavelli 1963, 134, note 12) advises readers not to forget where alternative priorities are discussed.

I believe that Sasso is premature in dismissing Machiavelli's statements as rhetorical flourish, thereby abandoning analytical resolution of the apparent discrepancy. In fact, I think his dismissal is representative of a wider and often more egregious mistreatment and devaluation of Machiavelli's discussions of war. This essay is a rehabilitation. The first part is devoted to articulating, and then ques-

[1] The translations of Machiavelli are mine and favor clumsy accuracy over fluidity. Page numbers in the notations are to the Feltrinelli editions of the Italian.

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tioning, the unsatisfactory characterizations of Machiavelli's reflections on war, which I believe are linked to misguided interpretations of his humanism. The second part, liberated from this scholarly prejudice, undertakes a more accurate appraisal of Machiavelli's reflections on war, arguing that they extend widely into his considerations of civil affairs. I argue that his enmity for mercenaries and cavalry extends to an enmity for the Florentine aristocracy, and that his embrace of infantry and judgment of auxiliary troops is an endorsement of popular influence in civil affairs. For Machiavelli, warfare includes a meticulous monitoring of the social repository from which military personnel are drawn, often demanding tactical compromises in light of civic developments. The prince, for instance, is to embrace warfare not just for strategic advantages, but also to avoid the "disdain" and "suspicion" that would otherwise infect the appropriate "proportion" of civic to military undertakings (Machiavelli 1960, 62 [*Prince* 14]). To think about war, then, means also to remain cognizant of domestic constraints.

Machiavelli's Humanism

Who is it, anyway, that would not wish to change out of muddy clothes before retiring with the evening read? Do we not so react to our professor's hyperventilated recitation of that most famous of Renaissance missives (Machiavelli 1961b, 301–06 [*Letters* 140, 10 December 1513]), where Niccolò Machiavelli tells his friend Vettori how he sheds the quotidian and levitates with the ancients? The hoopla is hardly immediately justified and is nervously manufactured, I think, to deal with the complexity of its author and his era.[2] The letter becomes reassuring corroboration[3] that despite tortures to match any inflicted on his medieval predecessors, Machiavelli chooses the Eros of the brother clan of ancient literary heros over the Thanatos of Christian asceticism. He distinguishes himself from Dante, de Sanctis informs us (Machiavelli 1961b, back cover), because Machiavelli's own *commedia* forsakes the divine in favor of the real. The letter substantiates the connection of Italian Renaissance humanism with a defiant and energetic, although perhaps overweening, association with the past. For the humanist, the past offers not a retreat, but a source of inspiration, fortification, and dignity. For Sasso's Machiavelli, it is the "eternal ideal" (Sasso 1980, 322; see also Chabod 1964, 97).

Jacob Burckhardt, champion of this interpretation, describes the Italian humanists as "completely swamped" (1965, 121) by their devotion to the ancients. And his perspective, that which I call "atavistic," is replicated in many general treat-

[2] Perhaps the inclination to the exercise is most clearly expressed by Rahe (2000), whose very endeavor is titled "Situating Machiavelli." Sullivan also detects a scholarly tendency to subsume Machiavelli too aggressively: "Pocock so emphasizes Machiavelli's context that ultimately he imposes the context on Machiavelli's thought" (1992, 310).

[3] Hankins is relieved to report "that Machiavelli was himself a humanist, in the most concrete professional sense, can no longer be denied" (1996, 134).

ments of Machiavelli (Allen 1941, 459; Berlin 1982; Croce n.d, 585; Plamenatz 1963, 1:32; Sabine and Thorson 1973, 335; Skinner 1978, 1:182). Burckhardt (1965, 120–32) describes the Italian humanist as a brilliant, but lonely and unreliable element, susceptible to distraction and impatient with bombastic patriotism. Aloof from particular political and social arrangements, the humanist prepares documents and crafts oratory with erudition, not agenda, in mind. Antiquity provides the language, the distance, and the courage to maintain skepticism and avoid earnestness. Machiavelli can thereby come to epitomize the Florentine "cunning shrewdness" (Chabod 1964, 71).

The letter reinforces and amplifies this interpretation. Where Machiavelli in other works might insinuate Cicero, or Cato, or Vegetius, the letter is clear confession of his dependence on classical literature, human expression at its most serene. These monumental precedents distract him from menial worries and embolden him in the face of his anxieties. Although bird-like and delicate, he betrays a "smile of sarcastic pity" (Chabod 1964, 71).[4] However, his strength is derivative and detached, so his bravado is pure only in the isolation of his study. Inevitably he becomes the brilliant but deferential custodian of more distinguished pedigrees ("deprived in everything except boldness and genius" [Ridolfi 1954, 33]). He writes powerful speeches and invents breathtaking strategies, only to see them executed by others (Black 1990, 86; Gilbert 1986, 17; Guicciardini 1931, 297; Rubenstein 1972, 8–9; Villari 1927, v. 1, 394–95, note 2). Even his title, "cancelliere della seconda cancelleria," substantiates his status (see Delbrück 1985, 101), and his appreciative compatriots cannot help but voice their indignation (Machiavelli 1961b, 43 [*Letters* 8, 19 July 1499]).

This interpretation may be benign in some applications to Machiavelli, but in terms of his practical, and theoretical, association with war, it is devastating. Isolation and atavism may, in fact, be the two most damaging inclinations in warfare; and not surprisingly, then, the profile of Machiavelli assembled in the context of atavistic humanism adeptly delegitimizes Machiavelli's practical experience in military affairs. Rather than a serious and consistent pursuit, his interest in battle is a lark, opportunistically indulged to enliven his normally bookish itinerary. Whether driven by the blush of his benefactors' affections or by the encouragement of loyal colleagues, Machiavelli episodically exchanges green eyeshade for pith helmet. His military forays are portrayed as cute, sophomoric projections of a stunted machismo, and we are encouraged to chuckle at this Florentine Quixote, misdirecting the maneuvers of 3,000 dizzy soldiers on a sweltering parade ground (Atkinson and Sices 1996, 376; Mallett 1974, 259). For Machiavelli, warfare is purgative of undeserved anonymity and subservience (Ridolfi 1954, 345). And so the military dabblings are not taken seriously; rather than congruous with the

[4] Given the title of his biography, Viroli also reads much into the smiles of posthumous portraits of Machiavelli. He believes the smile is an attempt to resist "grief and outrage" (2000, 259). Feld argues similarly that "Machiavelli is one of those intellectuals whose compensation and whose burden in life is to believe himself far cleverer than those society and fate have placed above him in the social order" (1984, 88).

rest of his life and thought, they are isolated eruptions of rebellion and catharsis.[5]

These biographical depictions encourage patronizing analyses not only of Machiavelli's participation, but also of his deliberations regarding military affairs. Chabod, for instance, scoffs at Machiavelli's hyperbolic condemnation of mercenaries as little more than a psychic sanctuary from the "forced discipline of the public negotiations." Just as he jumps at the opportunity to march the soldiers, so does Machiavelli indulge in his writing energies only partially repressed by his atavistic humanist demeanor. In writing, he can vent "the bitterness of the memories, the anger long contained" (Chabod 1964, 75). Where he should have seen that dependence upon the *condottieri* and their mercenary troops derives from broader social and political causes (Chabod 1964, 17, 78), he chooses simple and impetuous solutions, such as a romantic dependence upon a revived citizen militia. Chabod argues that this is "the most formidable error to which Machiavelli ever succumbed" (1964, 74; see also Skinner 1978, 1:173–75).

Especially vulnerable under this interpretation, then, are Machiavelli's technical discussions of tactics and munitions. He is either excused or castigated for his apparent "narrowness of military experience" (Villari 1927, 1:312), despite his lengthy and formidable association with the Florentine militia. Variously, he is accused of insufficiently embracing artillery (Gilbert 1986, 29; Oman 1979, 94) and of excessive dependence upon infantry (Pieri 1955, 55; Tommasini 1911, 227–28); and he is "pathetic" in his rejection of a standing, professional army (Hobohm 1913, 100; see also Pieri 1955, 8–10).[6] Not surprisingly, then, publishers of his work continue to place the *Art of War* with his "minor political writings" (Machiavelli 1961a). As atavistic humanist Machiavelli need not be taken seriously in terms of his military considerations. We can then dismiss or devalue the statements regarding the importance of war as exaggerations of a dilettante (Skinner 1978, 1:174) suffering romantic delusions. And so by marginalizing his military recommendations we can continue to receive *The Prince*, for instance, as a less daunting work of "political" theory.

Although economical, this interpretation is strikingly vulnerable to revision. As far as the biographical depiction goes, Machiavelli was hardly a wimp. His second fiddle in the chancery was to the most esteemed humanist of the day, and his military interests were longstanding and complex (Dionisotti 1980, 13; Hörnqvist 2002, 149, 160). The incident regarding the parade ground debacle, recounted by one known more for creativity than accuracy (Bandello 1966, 464) probably did not occur (Villari 1927, 1:463–64). Instead, Machiavelli concen-

[5] Rubenstein 1972, 7; see also Godman 1998, 181; Pesman Cooper 1982. Ridolfi (1954, 378) characterizes Machiavelli himself as an "unarmed prophet." Chabod (1964, 11) suggests that Machiavelli died of grief for his being yet again overlooked for a position in the Palazzo.

[6] Hobohm is especially critical of Machiavelli: "The *Art of War* does not take into account actual Renaissance-Discipline, rather, it is based on the fanciful notion that a soldier's abilities are an equal match for any type of weapon and any kind of military strategy" (1913, 559, translation mine).

trates on military endeavors more suited to his experience and acumen. Contrary to the accounts of enterprising sycophants (Machiavelli 1961b, 194, 195–57 [*Letters* 99, 8 June 1509; 101, 17 June 1509]), his sacking of Pisa was a siege, not a battle. In fact, Machiavelli freely admits in the *Art of War* (1961a, 326 [*Art of War*, preface]), in a tone different than the usual false modesty, his amateur status as a military strategist. And as for the famous letter, we now learn that the "*mi transferisco*," heretofore solid evidence of a metaphorical return to antiquity, recalls a common medieval and Renaissance allusion whereby the transfer is more a resurrection than a relocation. Machiavelli is bringing the ancients forward, not returning to them (Godman 1998, 257).

Of course, the particulars of Machiavelli's extraction from atavistic humanism owe much to the more general objections of Hans Baron, synthesized in his concept of "civic humanism." Where Burckhardt's atavistic humanism might have described the early efforts of Petrarch, it did not fully represent the inclination of more mature Renaissance humanism to adjust the past to contemporary exigencies and insights (Baron 1968, 151–71; see also Buck 1971, lv). Baron discovers that atavistic humanism does not adequately describe Renaissance thinkers like Leonardo Bruni, whose reverence for the old ways of chivalry and discipline are embraced for reasons of patriotism and civic reform, not detached erudition. Bruni calls for the revival of the medieval militia (Bruni 1987, 127–45) as a model for republican comportment, and Baron, noting Machiavelli's distaste for mercenaries, installs Bruni as mentor, having inspired the "disgust for his own time that three generations later became characteristic of Machiavelli" (Baron 1966, 431).

Rather than suggest the marginalization of Machiavelli's thoughts on war with patronizing allusions to personal inadequacies, this interpretation helps connect warfare to the more conventional political tracts. Tactical deficiencies occur not out of deficient military acumen, but out of mitigating concerns for grander issues. "Without overinterpretation," argues Pocock (1975, 199), the *Art of War* is elevated and connected to the *Discourses*. We learn that Machiavelli is not just interested in concentrating on military recruitment among the citizenry instead of depending on the *condottieri*; rather, like Bruni, he is interested in extending the influence of military deportment into the wider citizenry itself. Although the lesson is made "much less explicitly," Machiavelli is thought to believe that "only the soldier can make a good citizen" (Pocock 1975, 201). Raimondi, concurring, calls it the "militarization of citizenship" (1977, 6). And, of course, this discovery endows Machiavelli's military musings with immense importance. His political agenda, including what might be considered purely domestic, is now inextricably attached to war and its implements. Machiavelli, reminiscent of Bruni, is disgusted with the sloth and cravenness of his fellow citizens, so he sends them to boot camp (Pocock, 1975, 90).

Unfortunately, however, while the "militarization of civilians" may be appropriate to distinguish Bruni from his more atavistic predecessors, it is an unsatisfactory antidote to the atavistic perspective on Machiavelli. Machiavelli may be a "civic humanist" in the wider sense of exploiting rather than revering ancient

institutions, but he does not exploit the military with the same innocence as Bruni. Rather than explore the possibility of a complex interaction of military and civil affairs, the militarization of civilians is a crude imposition of traditional military matters on civilian life, an imposition that Machiavelli believes unworkable in surroundings he argues had changed drastically in the three generations since Bruni. Pocock, in the tradition of Baron, associates Machiavelli with a dedication to "military discipline" (1975, 201) in the broader society, overlooking Machiavelli's numerous warnings regarding the suitability of traditional protocols in mature societies like Florence (1960, 293 [*Discourses* 2.5]; 1962, 211 [*History of Florence* 2.42]). Even Clausewitz argues that military strategy "does not inquire how a country should be organized and a people trained and ruled in order to produce the best military results" (1976, 144). So while praising Machiavelli for integrating war and politics, he depicts the *Art of War* as outside Machiavelli's "political writings" (1992, 281).

The result is that while the influence of Machiavelli's placement with atavistic humanism devalues the military, his association with civic humanism devalues the political. Under the second interpretation it might be easier to decipher the exhortation in *The Prince* to attend only to war, but it becomes more difficult to interpret Machiavelli's observation that the people have become more important than the military (1960, 83 [*Prince* 19]). And Machiavelli's supposed attachment to extending military discipline to the broader population is problematic given his admiration of the chaos of Roman domestic political arrangements (1960, 141–46 [*Discourses* 1.6]). Moreover, Machiavelli (1960, 286 [*Discourses* 2.3]) is critical of Sparta, the quintessential martial society. And as for paganism and a return to simple noble concerns, the *Discourses* is as suspicious of the simplicity of paganism as it is complimentary (Lukes 1984). The *Art of War* devotes a good deal of attention to the interests of peace,[7] and the *Discourses* speak more about Numa, whom Livy describes as the King of Peace, than it does about Tullus or Romulus. Finally, when Machiavelli does have input regarding the training of the real militia, he orders his constables to restrain their disciplinary inclinations and to apprise him of any "scandals" lest they overreact (Machiavelli 1857, 348–50; see also Bayley 1961, 278). He prefers a "road in the middle" (Machiavelli 1961a, 347 [*Art of War*]) between compulsion and voluntarism to maintain appropriate morale.

So we are left with two competing versions of Machiavelli's humanism and two related interpretations of his considerations of war. In the first, he is a detached classicist, periodically seduced by antiquated and romantic military undertakings. Thus, his reflections on war are downplayed or dismissed as amateurish. In the second interpretation of his humanism, he adapts his classical training and admiration to avid republican partisanship, and he sees, like Bruni, the

[7] Mansfield (1998, 192, 194) recognizes that rather than a militarization of citizenship, the *Art of War* encourages the opposite. Mansfield, however, interprets this as a betrayal of "Machiavellianism," undertaken to render the book more palatable, and thus publishable, in the author's lifetime.

redemptive qualities for society in traditional military discipline and chivalry. I argue that in extracting Bruni from the more traditional and atavistic humanism of Petrarch, Baron and his successors fail to see the extent to which Machiavelli departs even further from Bruni. Machiavelli discusses the military not, as Bruni does, to reform Florentine society; rather, he invokes the military in order that he might promote and articulate a seamless compatibility between military and civilian affairs. Machiavelli's famous admonition that "there cannot be good laws where there are not good arms" (1960, 53 [*Prince* 12]) suggests, I believe, a reciprocal relationship, the symmetry of which is obscured by scholarly accounts of his humanism.

Redefining Warfare

Clausewitz's famous aphorism about war as politics by other means is insufficient to illuminate Machiavelli's more thorough integration. Rather, for Machiavelli, war and politics are so intertwined that distinctions even regarding means cannot be made. Clearly, when Machiavelli exhorts his apprentice to "attend to war," he does not mean just logistical considerations of battle; however, the extent of his broadening has not been fully documented.[8] For Machiavelli, politics and war are dialectically connected, and cannot be treated independently. Atavistic humanists devalue his military reflections and are thus free to focus on his politics, especially his famous cleverness. Civic humanists embrace his military considerations, but as a *deus ex machina*, lacking sensitivity of the social and political environment expected to invoke and to receive martial law. Machiavelli, however, considers war in terms of its widest ramifications, to the extent that the vocabulary of war must be scrutinized and adjusted to his subtlety. Machiavelli's revised vocabulary includes the terms, "mercenary," "cavalry," and "auxiliary," the careful consideration of which betrays the complexity and breadth of his reflections on war.

Chapter 12 of *The Prince*, which treats the uselessness of mercenaries, receives scant scholarly attention, not so much because it is held as unimportant, but because explication is apparently unnecessary. Under virtually every permutation of the humanistic perspective imposed on Machiavelli, he is intoxicated with nostalgia for the irretrievable citizen militia, either of ancient Rome or the medieval commune,[9] and he condenses responsibility for lost valiance to the practice of paying foreigners, "imported combatants" (Feld 1984, 79), to fight wars. This, in turn provokes celebrations of purity in what can now be suspected as

[8] Sasso, while appreciating the more recent efforts to connect Machiavelli's comments on war to his political interests, nevertheless accuses these interpreters of a premature and overzealous undertaking. "The rule," he says, "has many and varied exceptions" (1980, 582). For instance, Machiavelli seems to sacrifice his republican political sympathies to military elitism when he bans the subjects of conquered territories from military service.

[9] Hörnqvist (2002, 149–51) describes the restrictive scholarly debate that weds Machiavelli's militia recommendations either to ancient Rome or medieval Florentine tradition.

Machiavelli's facade of dissimulation (Chabod 1964; Derla 1980a,b; Dietz 1986; Foscolo 1972; Gramsci 1966; Meinecke 1965). Feld can argue that war is just too important to Machiavelli to be subjected to his usual shenanigans: "The conduct of war, one has to conclude, is for Machiavelli something too noble and too important to be subjected to those principles which govern the rest of political life" (1984, 81).[10]

Machiavelli leaves some generous hints, however, that "mercenary" is no longer a straightforward concept,[11] and thus not so easily exempted from his normal complexity. For instance, in the *Art of War* (1961a, 341 [*Art of War* 1]), we encounter Fabrizio Colonna, a notorious mercenary of the standard definition, representing Machiavelli's own revulsion for mercenaries. Colish declares Machiavelli's choice the "central anomaly" (1998, 1152) of the work, and she provides historical and literary explanations for his seemingly mysterious behavior. As for the historical explanation, she centers on the Colonna family's famous opposition to the Orsini. She then, justifiably, links the Orsini to the Medici, and thus completes a syllogism that has Fabrizio representing Machiavelli's distaste for the Medici and their antirepublican sympathies.[12] As for the literary explanation, Colish connects Machiavelli to a more general technique encountered in dialogues of the fifteenth century, especially those of Bruni, whereby complexity and entertainment are enhanced by associating admirable positions to contradictory biographies.[13]

As for opposition to the Medici, Machiavelli could have chosen any number of other characters who would not have complicated the issue with traits so apparently opposed to Machiavelli in other areas. And as for the literary device, the imposition of humanism seems to occur again. Machiavelli does not seem to have used the device in any other context, and I will continue to cast suspicion on the

[10] Despite his reputation, or more likely because of it, Machiavelli is continually subject to speculation about his hidden attachment to "universal norms" (Derla 1980b, 35). Meinecke (1965) leads the famous contingent that senses a hidden morality in Machiavelli, while others (Dietz 1986; Gramsci 1966) discover a secret, admirable, and courageous strategy in his surface of deception. Again we see Machiavelli's pragmatic and subtle comments about warfare linked to a simple and unwavering commitment to a "golden age," the beauty of which blinds its admirer to its irretrievability (Feld 1984, 81).

[11] The Feltrinelli edition (Machiavelli 1961a, 315 [*Art of War*, editor's introduction]) hints at the complexity of his concept by saying, tantalizingly, that he means only "a particular kind of mercenary." That Machiavelli's vocabulary and a precise understanding of it is paramount is argued in Sullivan (1992, 314–17). Military historians also betray an uneasiness with the simplicity of the concept, admitting that its apparent lack of ambiguity is as much a reflection of convenience as accuracy (Mallett 1974, 13).

[12] See Dietz (1986, 779–81), for a thorough discussion and bibliography of this position.

[13] Colish does not mention that the technique is employed by Dante. Canto 10 of *Paradiso* has Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican, praising the Franciscans. Canto 12 has St. Bonaventure, a Franciscan mystic, praising St. Dominic and his Dominican heirs. Dante even goes further in his surprising juxtapositioning by placing Siger de Braband next to Thomas Aquinas in heaven. Aquinas had been dispatched to Paris to combat Siger's Averroist doctrines. Accordingly, Siger was anathematized in 1270 and 1277.

claim that Machiavelli holds the perspective of Bruni in high esteem, making it less likely that Machiavelli would copy Bruni's literary forms. Furthermore, Fabrizio himself vehemently denies he is the "anomalous" character of Colish's depiction, declaring that he is not, in fact, a mercenary (Machiavelli 1961a, 341 [*Art of War* 1]).

Neither a literary convention nor a complex familial alliance, however, can explain Machiavelli's robust and straightforward endorsement (Dionisotti 1980, 13) of yet another famous mercenary, don Miguel de Corella, known in Florence as don Michelotto. Depicted by Guicciardini (1931, 281) as the most crude and terrible of men, this former Borgia henchman was appointed to police the militia; and, despite Machiavelli's public pronouncements regarding militia superiority, he does not hesitate to activate Michelotto in times of need (Machiavelli 1857, 331; see also Pesman Cooper 1982). Not surprisingly, just as Colish labors to reconcile Machiavelli's favorable treatment of Fabrizio, so too have scholars been troubled by Machiavelli's connection with don Michelotto. Black (1990, 89) considers the appointment of Michelotto the "most controversial feature" of the militia project, and he attempts to distance Machiavelli from the Spanish *condottiere* by attributing his retention, by conjecture only, to others.

Considered independently, the impressions of Colish and those of Black are problematic. Taken together, we are encouraged to consider that the scholarly difficulties in reconciling Machiavelli's apparently contradictory behavior arise in assuming that individuals like Fabrizio and Michelotto typify the mercenaries against which Machiavelli rails in his more general condemnations. I suggest that Colish and Black do not fully appreciate Machiavelli's thorough synthesis of warfare and politics. If domestic political concerns are fully considered in issues of war, simple designations like "citizen" or "foreigner" may not be enough to distinguish mercenary from native elements. Indeed, like Colish, I concur that opposition to the Medici and their ilk is an important part of Machiavelli's choice of Fabrizio as narrator, but not for the convoluted reasons she offers. Instead, there is much in Machiavelli to suggest that Florentine citizenship has come to mean very little regarding devotion to the city, and that the Medici typify the decline.[14] And, similarly, there is evidence that Machiavelli is willing to tolerate, or even cautiously ratify, a certain kind of paid warrior, one not necessarily assigned mercenary status.[15]

In fact, when Machiavelli defines mercenary in the *Art of War*, he refers not to nationality,[16] or even strictly to the method of remuneration. Instead, it is how the

[14] More substantiation regarding Machiavelli's suspicions regarding the aristocracy follows, but as for the Medici in particular, Machiavelli's comments on Lorenzo's marriage to the Roman, Clarice degli Orsini, invoke the mercenary preoccupation with self: "for he that does not want citizens for relatives wants them for servants, and therefore it is reasonable that he has not friends of them" (1962, 470 [*History of Florence* 7.11]).

[15] Although he does not connect the details to a complex definition of mercenary, Lynch (1998, 32–40) notices that Machiavelli seems often in the practical realm to abrogate his theoretical resistance to mercenaries.

[16] In fact, he speaks of "soldiers of Italy" as mercenaries (1961a, 336 [*Art of War* 1]).

individual considers the remuneration that counts. Mercenaries are those "men that use the exercise of money for their true art" (Machiavelli 1961a, 336 [*Art of War* 1]). The result is that the mercenary cannot abide peace and must either extend war unnecessarily or plunder indiscriminately during war to amass a reserve of sustenance. Both of these practices are repugnant to the soul of the *uomo buono* since they obscure the distinction between friend and enemy (Machiavelli 1961a, 336 [*Art of War* 1]). A mercenary will not hesitate to pursue private over communal interest. It is not a mercenary's extranationality that engenders concern, but the mercenary's consuming self-interest. Any soldier, foreign or domestic, is mercenary if unable to adjust to peace and its alternative priorities. We may at least consider the sincerity of Colonna when he says that he has never considered soldiering his true art (Machiavelli 1961a, 342 [*Art of War* 1]). And, by extension, we may speculate that an individual is mercenary if consumed with self-interest, willing to exploit friend and foe indiscriminately.

Of course, this suggests the possibility, not considered by Colish, that if Colonna can demonstrate he was not in it only for the money, he is not, in fact, a mercenary, and that citizens, including and even especially the Medici, may not qualify for automatic exemption from mercenary status. Taking Machiavelli seriously regarding the robust synthesis of warfare and politics involves more, then, than merely adding standard terms and conceptions of war to the political vocabulary. The terms and conceptions of warfare themselves are subject to adjustment, whereby concepts like mercenary extend to unconventional referents. That one of those referents could be the Florentine aristocracy adds intrigue to what might otherwise be a less compelling discussion of semantics.

That Machiavelli's concept of mercenary, with its relative indifference to nationality, might include Florentine aristocrats illuminates his otherwise perplexing discussion of cavalry, the second component of Machiavelli's warfare vocabulary to be revisited. For while it may be clear that Machiavelli intends to reduce the attention paid to cavalry (1961a, 369 [*Art of War* 2]), the service of choice for the wealthy citizens, it is not immediately clear as to why. He is reluctant, in the *Art of War*, to introduce specific tactical deficiencies, first postponing the discussion (1961a, 358 [*Art of War* 1]), then praising modern cavalry, with its saddles and stirrups, as being more impressive and intimidating than that of the ancients (1961a, 367 [*Art of War* 2]). In fact, the cavalry is at least in some respects less corrupt than the infantry (1961a, 396 [*Art of War* 2]). Machiavelli follows general statements about the weakness of states that rely on cavalry (1961a, 367 [*Art of War* 2]) with strangely ambiguous analyses of the Parthians' tactical reliance on cavalry, claiming that they actually had a tactical advantage in certain terrains (1961a, 368 [*Art of War* 2]). Of course, there is also his more famous compliment to the French cavalry in Chapter 26 of *The Prince* (1960, 104–05).

While we may be confused about the battlefield deficiencies of the cavalry, we learn, however, that in general it is overly dependent upon its accoutrements

(1961a, 396–97 [*Art of War* 2]),[17] that its mobility renders it more likely to conduct independent forays (1961a, 454–55 [*Art of War* 5]), that it is more for show than go (1961a, 366–67 [*Art of War* 2]),[18] and that it is prone to plunder the enemy (1961a, 455 [*Art of War* 5]). More specific reservations center not on the comportment of the cavalry itself, but on the people and the regimes that admire it more than the infantry. It is those who "esteem more the cavalry," not the cavalry itself, who are responsible for "every ruin" (1961a, 367 [*Art of War* 2]). Unreliability, opulence, and venality are apparently more harmful to observers than to practitioners.

Cavalry is to be scrutinized, then, not for its tactical deficiencies, but for the same consuming self-interest that distinguishes Machiavelli's concept of mercenary. This means that Machiavelli is not so interested in what the cavalry does as he is in the kind of individuals that comprise it. They have little attachment to communal interests, and they are poor role models to those not yet as venal. Thus, we may suspect that the real target of his distrust of the cavalry is the social class from which it springs. Machiavelli's distrust of the cavalry makes more sense if placed in the wider context of civic concerns. Just as he might have been willing to endorse cautiously the use of traditional mercenaries like Fabrizio and Michelotto, so might the cavalry have tactical assets to be exploited as long as it remains perceived as ancillary.[19] In fact, Machiavelli declares that if the "nerve center" of the armed forces remains the infantry, "of necessity" will a good cavalry issue from its ranks (1961a, 513 [*Art of War* 7]). Distinction should spring from humble origins, and the army should, as per Machiavelli's ultimate regulation, "scorn the delicate life and luxurious dress" (1961a, 513 [*Art of War* 7]).[20] It is difficult to restrain Machiavelli's advice within the strict parameters of the military. If Florentine society, not just Florentine warfare, is to succeed, dependence on the rich citizens must be reconsidered.

Mercenaries, then, are as dangerous in the populace as they are in the army. In fact, I think that Machiavelli's adjustments and interpretations of the vocabulary of warfare are undertaken in order to promote a fundamental change in the ingredients of a successful political community. That mercenary for Machiavelli includes aristocratic elements of the native society is, I believe, part of his wider mission to identify a new, more promising repository of communal responsibility. While altering the vocabulary of war in a way that impugns the traditional recipient of deference, Machiavelli also changes the terminology in a way that elevates what he sees as the aristocracy's successor. The connection of military

[17] See also Pieri (1955, 2–3).

[18] For a historical account of the absence of discipline in the cavalry, see Pieri (1933, 568).

[19] Machiavelli is renowned for his involvement with the infantry, but he also helped organize the Florentine cavalry. Additionally, Fabrizio Colonna was famous for his equestrian, not infantry aptitudes (see Oman 1979, 138).

[20] Book 7 of the *Art of War* includes a list of twenty-seven rules of military discipline, the last of which is to "spregiare il vivere delicato e il vestire lussurioso" (513).

elements and class origins is substantiated by the connection of Machiavelli's beloved infantry to the social stratum from which it is recruited.

To appreciate that connection, yet another of Machiavelli's military terms requires attention. The term "auxiliary" is considered by Livy to mean native, but noncitizen elements of the armed forces. For the most part from colonies designated "Latin" but not "Roman" (Livius 1861, 1:95 [*History of Rome* 2.53]; see also Vegetius 1996, 30 [*Epitome* 2:1]), the auxiliaries are not citizens of Rome, but neither are they mere allies or subjects. Rather, they occupy a "waiting room pending the acquisition of full citizenship" (Nicolet 1980, 30). That Livy does not extend the term to include foreign allies is substantiated in his discussions of battles where the citizen troops are enhanced by both auxiliaries and allies (Livius 1861, 2:375, 380 [*History of Rome* 40.31, 40.40]). Auxiliaries, trusted more than allies, remain for the most part support for the more valiant and loyal citizen warriors, as the incentives of the auxiliaries are less noble and compelling (Livius 1861, 2:83 [*History of Rome* 30.33]).

In the only chapter of *The Prince* that opens with a definition, Machiavelli is unusually clear regarding what he considers the qualities of an auxiliary: "auxiliary arms, that are the other useless arms, are when one calls a power, that with his arms he comes to you to help and defend" (1960, 58 [*Prince* 13]). Auxiliary, then, means for Machiavelli what for Livy would be considered an ally. Machiavelli moves the concept from inside to outside territorial boundaries, opening the possibility of affording noncitizen residents, the *contadini*, enhanced status. And, of course, if we are accumulating evidence of complications to the concept of mercenary in a way that incriminates citizens, then we are less surprised to see a corresponding elevation of a cohort considered by Livy to be only moderately valuable.

That Machiavelli again so carefully and subtly adjusts the terminology of war makes it more difficult to dismiss his recruitment of noncitizen soldiers as a pragmatic necessity. Likewise, is it more difficult to retain the impression that Machiavelli is attached to the medieval commune, and its devotion to the citizen militia. At the least, we can suspect Skinner's depiction of "the ideal of a citizen army" (1978, 1:174), and we can reevaluate Pocock's insistence that "only citizens" (1975, 201) comprise Machiavelli's ideal army.[21] That Machiavelli removes the stigma of the auxiliary classification from the *contadini* is evidence that his endorsement of the peasantry as warriors is more than just a short term concession to pragmatism.

We are, moreover, more comfortable with Machiavelli's frequent and persistent references to *contadini* troops in his diplomatic writings. In his "Discorso dell'ordinare lo stato di Firenze alle armi," he goes to great lengths to demonstrate that the Florentine militia should be undertaken, not with *cittadini*, but with

[21] Sullivan (1992, 314), in her compelling demonstration of Pocock's eagerness to categorize Machiavelli as a civic humanist, points out that Pocock could produce only one quotation containing the word, "citizen," that supported his argument.

residents of the *contado*, who by the sixteenth century were anything but the gentry of the medieval era (Becker 1967, 128, 179; Cohn 1980, 108–13; Fiumi 1956; Morelli 1956, 87–104). Machiavelli uses the term, *cittadini*, only once in his discourse, predicting that if undertaken first in the *contado*, only gradually could one expect the proper influences to reach the city (1961c, 100).[22] Legally and conceptually outside the bounds of citizenship, the *contadini* are a middle ground whom Machiavelli believes more tractable and less corrupt.[23]

In the *Art of War*, despite presumptuous translations, Machiavelli does not employ the term, "citizen militia," preferring the more ambiguous *milizia*.[24] That he does not automatically mean citizen is clear in his recommendation to include even *sudditi* (subjects) for employment in the force (1961a, 348 [*Art of War* 1]). Rather than a citizen militia conditioning the wider population to propriety, this is a popular militia actually protected from citizens, and burdened rather than inspired with distant expectations of integration. And that his militia is different from the traditional is reinforced by his contrasting it to the Roman legions, that employed only "*uomini romani*" (1961a, 352 [*Art of War* 1]). Machiavelli does not discuss the concept of extending citizenship to the *contado*, even though he applauds the Romans for their practice of doing so (1960, 345–49 [*Discourses* 2:23]). There is something wrong with the citizens of Florence that he does not want to infect the periphery.

Just as Machiavelli's condemnation of mercenaries and associated distrust of the cavalry regards social elements outside the formal military, so Machiavelli's faith in the *contadini* is not just about, or even primarily about, his endorsement of their soldiering capacities. Machiavelli and Vegetius may both promote the country folk as best for the infantry, but where Vegetius focuses on physical, and thus primarily martial aptitudes (1996, 4–5), Machiavelli extends his scrutiny to more versatile character traits, such as a lack of cunning and malice (1961a, 345 [*Art of War* 1]). Much like his analysis of cavalry, an intriguing nebulousness imbues Machiavelli's depiction of his infantry. Rather than specific references to its fighting ability or its tactical flexibility, we learn that it is in general tractable (1961a, 374 [*Art of War* 2]), easily regimented (1961a, 378 [*Art of War* 2]), and less rapacious (1961a, 455 [*Art of War* 5]). The "timid and ordered," we are

[22] In another of Machiavelli's documents (1961d, 109), he mentions extending the procurement of troops from the *contado* into the *distretto*, not the *città*.

[23] There is a fascinating historical literature that outlines the social and political ramifications of the growing segregation between city and country dwellers, much of which reinforces and substantiates Machiavelli's reticence regarding *cittadini*. The elites, after the Ciompi Rebellion, feared the disruptive potential of the *contadini*, and thus endeavored to protect themselves from this outside energy and innovation. Laws were enacted which clearly betrayed parochial concerns on the part of the city dwellers. See Cohn 1980, 91–113; Kirshner and Molho 1978.

[24] Nor does Machiavelli employ the term, *milizia*, in *The Prince*. In fact, he prefers the more ambiguous term, "native troops." De Grazia audaciously modifies a quotation from Machiavelli: " 'you must understand this, that the best armies that there are, are those of armed populations,' that is, formed of all citizens" (1989, 383).

informed, are much less weak than the "fierce and disordered" (1961a, 375 [*Art of War* 2]). Machiavelli could as easily be describing the traits of good grammar school students, clearly departing from the more exquisite and gallant priorities of Bruni.

What is interesting about the *Art of War*, then, is not its slavish repetition of Vegetius, but its digressions. And when the digressions are addressed, the book ceases to be a paean to classicism; rather it resembles more a frontal attack on Bruni, and consequently complicates Machiavelli's association with civic humanism. In taking on Bruni's celebration of the citizen cavalry (see Bayley 1961, 198, 214), Machiavelli is retiring not just a military but a social arrangement. Citizens have become mercenaries. They serve themselves and are thus best relegated to positions perceived to be peripheral and innocuous. This, rather than tactical considerations, is the source of Machiavelli's dissatisfaction with the cavalry. His descriptions of citizens as effete and blasé relate as much to their irrelevance regarding Florence's political and social future as to its military success. And the extent to which citizens continue to elicit the respect and attention of the more promising *contadini* only retards the desirable development of that promise.

Machiavelli's military reflections, then, cannot be properly extracted from his wider civic observations. His embrace of the infantry and distrust of the cavalry originate in his appraisal of the classes from which they spring. That is why, simultaneously and without the easy recourse to Sasso's justification based on rhetorical flourish, war is the constant preoccupation of the prince even though the people are more important than the military. Rather than militarize the population, Machiavelli seeks to popularize the military. Therefore, his tactical advice has political roots, and he is willing to sacrifice a shaky tactical advantage for a more dependable civic alternative. In fact, he is willing if need be to subordinate the importance of the conventional military itself. This is the insight of Fabrizio and precisely why he is not a mercenary. He distances himself from the class that has succumbed to self-aggrandizement, instead responding to the concerns and aptitudes of its less jaded replacement.

This means that at least a component of those concerns is an interest in peace. Even if the reality is elusive, the dream motivates a rural infantry not so enamored of chivalry and glory. In fact, the infantry requires a complex array of incentives.[25] Machiavelli does not idealize the peasants. He knows they care little about distinguishing themselves in battle and thus are less susceptible to straightforward valorous incentives. Chapter 25 of *The Prince* specifies glory and riches as the most important human motivations (1960, 99). Yet the drives are not evenly distributed among the population. While glory may have been the overwhelming interest of the obsolescent aristocracy, the surging influence of the people demands consideration of "booty" and other more pedestrian interests (1960, 198

[25] In fact, I believe the incentive of *gloria* has been generally overstated (Price 1977). Even the more valiant troops of the ancient context were more interested in riches than they were in glory (Machiavelli 1960, 198 [*Discourses* 1.29]).

[*Discourses* 1.29]). Thus, appeals to patriotism are fortified not just with pastoral images, but with the heavy hand of a ruthless constable. And while the cavalry is to receive no pay, the infantry may receive a small stipend. That Machiavelli anticipates less noble military motivations helps to explain why *The Prince* and the *Discourses* (see, for example 1960, 68–71 [*Prince* 17]; 1960, 146–49 [*Discourses* 1.7]) maintain an otherwise curious dependence on fear as the ultimate incentive.

Of course, there are repercussions, some quite worrisome, to reinforcing less aggressive inclinations in matters of state.[26] However, the worries need not be debilitating, and we may exploit again the dialectic of the civil and the military, which suggests that for the sake of republican sustenance, the liabilities of a more pastoral popular culture and its resultant military posture can be accommodated. Tactically, it means resorting more to siege than to attack. There is no doubt that storm is the purest and optimal military approach, the one used almost always by the ancient Romans (1960, 373 [*Discourses* 2.32]). However, we learn in a discussion just following that describing the accumulation of astuteness and malignity that even the Romans eventually abandoned their glorious "short and big" wars, resorting rather to long campaigns (1960, 294 [*Discourses* 2.6]). And in an intriguing discussion, Machiavelli describes the Romans as with an excess of military power (*tanta eccessiva potenza*) (1960, 288 [*Discourses* 2.4]), opening the door to a justification of leagues rather than imperial powers, as long as the league reduces its interest in expansion (1960, 289 [*Discourses* 2.4]).

Of course, Machiavelli is hardly a pacifist. He accepts, perhaps even embraces, the necessity of war, and he condones the strategic brutalization of native troops. However, he understands that the future is that of an informed and skeptical citizenry that will not be whipped into a violent frenzy by leaders who speak regularly with nymphs (1960, 161 [*Discourses* 1.11]). The new modes and orders that Machiavelli introduces (1960, 123 [*Discourses* 1.preface]) are the logical extension of the evolution set in motion by the decline of aristocracy and the resurgent opportunities for republican government. Popular participation, in military and civil affairs, must replace the obsolete reliance on popular innocuousness. Republics are distinguished not by institutions (see 1960, 133 [*Discourses* 1.2]), but by the nature of interpersonal relationships; and for Machiavelli, reliance on aristocratic models is increasingly destructive of republican inclinations. Too much is said about the residual of dissimulation and unilateralism in Machiavelli's republic (see Viroli 1990), while too little is said about the more important foundational impact of an energetic recognition and appreciation of popular interests. A careful reading of Machiavelli's military reflections shows that more than preparing for new tactics,[27] he is preparing for a new civic order,

[26] Some, like Viroli (1990, 158) argue that successful republics must undertake expansionary policies.

[27] Too much attention in general is directed at Machiavelli's tactical considerations. Indeed the need for tactics and dissimulation admits the persistence and power of the given conditions. See Lukes (2001).

an order that regardless of its specific institutional structure would be compelled to resist aristocracy and to indulge popular sentiments.

Conclusion

Instead of general, perfunctory statements about armies as models of citizenship, then, Machiavelli's discussions of modern warfare suggest some very specific interpretations of his political work. Machiavelli says nothing about the military experience changing the character of the *contadini*, as Raimondi (1977) mistakenly asserts. Rather, it is the military character that is changed by the participation of the *contadini*. Fabrizio is a model not because he is imposing, but because he is receptive. He represents a new model of stewardship, less aggressive and vicious, more reflective of pastoral and remunerative interests. Indeed, military history suggests that Machiavelli may have only been accentuating a transition that was already taking place.[28]

We may now have a more convincing reason why Machiavelli can at once focus on social and political arrangements while still insisting on the importance of the military. The military, if it remains as it is, will fail. Its success, however, depends not so much on tactical changes as it does on recognizing and embracing domestic political changes. Machiavelli's military musings are some of his most forward looking, and his most progressive. He wants to turn "corruption" into evolution, and to do that he considers institutions that accommodate the growth in popular acumen. The new army represents the new, more popular, concerns of society, which means a risky but necessary deemphasis of aggression and conquest.

An interesting embellishment to the Fabrizio issue emerges. He was defeated in the Battle of Ravenna by superior French tactics. So, Colish's question regarding why pick a mercenary becomes why pick a mercenary loser? The answer may be that even though the French won the battle, and in fact won every battle in their incursion, they were eventually compelled to withdraw for reasons of attrition (Delbrück 1985, 108). Fabrizio prevails not due to any tactical superiority, but due to the same strategy employed by Machiavelli at Pisa. This may yet be another recognition by Machiavelli, not of what is past, but of what is to come, in terms of warfare: "Swiss and lansquenets, once they were organized, could easily be increased with volunteers by assigning them to the mass, and it was, of course, the mass pressure that now gave the decision in battle" (Delbrück 1985, 108). Warfare itself was evolving in a way that could succeed with less dedicated troops.

[28] The most respected military historian of the Italian Renaissance reports that: "The fifteenth-century condottiere was not the foreign mercenary in the sense that he had often been in the fourteenth century. He was gradually transformed into a relatively faithful, increasingly aristocratic, and highly professional captain. . . . The captain of the late fifteenth century was more likely to spend his idle hours playing chess, listening to musicians, and gambling, than dreaming of conquests, counting his profits, or torturing his prisoners. Mars was seen less as the warrior god of war than as the lover of Venus" (Mallett 1974, 257–58).

With customary brilliance, Machiavelli predicts that his reflections on war will be misunderstood. In fact, the very first words of the *Art of War* betray his disappointment with how little the connection of civic to military affairs is appreciated.[29] He tells his friend, Lorenzo Strozzi, that the ancients are to be admired above all things for their apprehension of the intimate symbiosis (*non si troverebbono cose più unite*)(1961a, 325 [*Art of War* preface]). Policy responses in one domain cannot be appropriately undertaken or evaluated without examining their repercussions in the other.

In the preface to the first book of his *Discourses*, Machiavelli exhorts imitation of the ancients four times. Politicians are inept at the practice, but fortunately, imitation is still undertaken effectively in the artistic and medical professions (1960, 123–24 [*Discourses* 1.preface]). Yet we know, of course, that two more innovative vocations could not be found in Renaissance Florence. Artists and physicians retain the ancient impulse to adapt their techniques to changes in the aesthetic and scientific domains. To emulate ancient excellence does not mean to replicate ancient institutions.[30] To recapture the ancient symbiosis requires adaptation to modern conditions.

Thus, demeaning Machiavelli's tactical suggestions without considering changes in the civil context is unfortunate, as is overlooking the consideration of civil developments in the context of military concerns. New modes and orders are undertaken, then, to recalibrate civil and military institutions in a way that recaptures an ancient harmony. It is not, however, the ancient institutions that are to be recaptured. Invoking either civil or military models that may have distinguished prior epochs denies the imperative of adaptation. Subsuming Machiavelli under inordinate attachments to prevailing concepts of humanism impairs an appreciation of the distinction and its importance to Machiavelli's thinking.

When Machiavelli writes about war, his concern is for nothing less than the survival of the republic. Although he might be concerned about how the republic will do in battle, he is more concerned about the compatibility of the battle elements with the attendant civil society. The endorsement of the infantry is an endorsement of the people and the humors they represent. The trepidations about the cavalry reflect a wider condemnation of the mercenary behaviors of the aristocrats. For Machiavelli, the future demands so much political acumen in the conduct of war that attention to both is not only paramount, but indistinguishable. "Never lifting thought" from the exercise of war, then, is a sophisticated recognition, not a hyperbolic snub, of political exigencies.

[29] Gilbert (1986) may be the quintessential example. While holding that the *Art of War* "makes compromises to convention" not found in Machiavelli's more famous works, he insists that "*The Prince* and the *Discourses* are books on political rules and behavior and not on military organization and war" (1986, 24).

[30] See also Machiavelli 1960, 192–93 [*Discourses* 1.25]). Likewise, the *ghiribizzi* letter (Machiavelli 1961b, 228–31 [*Letters* 119]) reinforces Machiavelli's creative inclinations regarding the lessons of antiquity.

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