

Historicizing Liberty and Empire: Machiavelli, Rome and Florentine 'Imperialism'

Geoff Kennedy
University of Saskatchewan
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Introduction

Much has been made of the role of liberty and greatness in Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy*. Some scholars have argued that this problem constitutes a 'republican dilemma' that Machiavelli is unable to resolve due to the limits of Renaissance political discourse.¹ Others argue that Machiavelli subordinates republican liberty to the desire to attain greatness and empire.² Still others claim that this problem is related to Machiavelli's repudiation of contemporary admiration for Florentine expansionism amongst fellow republicans.³ Much of the debate around Machiavelli's discussion of liberty and greatness, however, places too much emphasis on the determining role that Rome plays in the way that he approaches this problem. The 'Roman model', transferred largely through the work of Sallust, is said to inform Machiavelli's approach to the relationship between liberty and empire (or greatness). This reduces the problem of liberty and empire to an ahistorical abstraction that is to be resolved at the level of theory. Not

¹ Armitage, David (2002). 'Empire and Liberty: A Republican Dilemma'. *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*. Gelderen Martin, van and Skinner, Quentin. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. **II**.

² Coby, J. Patrick (1999). *Machiavelli's Romans: Liberty and Greatness in the Discourses on Livy*. Lanham, Lexington Books.

³ Jurdjevic, Mark (2001). "Virtue, Commerce and the Enduring Florentine Republican Moment: Reintegrating Italy into the Atlantic Republican Debate." *Journal of the History of Ideas*.

enough emphasis has been placed on the role that Florentine commercial expansion and its relationship to Florentine politics plays in Machiavelli's characterization of the tension between liberty and empire.

This paper seeks to situate Machiavelli's understanding of the relationship between liberty and empire within the context of Florentine commercial expansion and guild politics. Only in the context of the real contradictions and problems of Florentine society does the historical model of Roman expansion come to have the significance that it does in Machiavelli's work. Thus, it is only by placing the 'republican dilemma', and Machiavelli's understanding of Roman history within a contemporary context of Florentine commercial expansion and the effect it had on republican politics, that we can come to an historically specific understanding of Machiavelli's thoughts on liberty and empire.

Machiavelli and the Roman Model of Imperialism

It has become increasingly common for historians of political thought to stress the intellectual debt that Machiavelli owes the antiquity, particularly republican Rome. This is a welcome development that has moved us beyond the traditional literature that tended to interpret Machiavelli as the harbinger – for good or ill – of all things modern.⁴ At the same time, however, there is a tendency to overstate the determining influence of Rome on Machiavelli's political thought. Republican Rome undoubtedly served as a model for Machiavelli's republicanism, but what needs to be explored is the interrelationship between this historical model and the specificity of his own historical context of

⁴ The most significant contribution to the modernity of Machiavelli is that of Leo Strauss.

Renaissance Florence. Why did republican Rome have such significance for Machiavelli? In order to begin to explore this question, we need to situate his understanding of Rome within his own context.

Sullivan argues that there are three Romes in Machiavelli's work: contemporary Christian Rome that is under the control of the Papacy; the historical pagan Rome of antiquity; and the Rome of Machiavelli's imagination.⁵ Sullivan argues that it is this third Rome that is important for Machiavelli, for it provides him with an ideal and abstraction construction by which to liberate men from the tyranny of the Christian religion. While the Rome of antiquity is important for Machiavelli, its inadequate approach to the relationship between religion and politics makes it a flawed model of republican emulation: 'although ancient Rome in many important respects offers the model for his new republic, Machiavelli must improve upon this model.'⁶ Machiavelli's innovation, therefore, is to rely on the Roman republican model in order to transcend it. Thus, the Rome that is important for Machiavelli is an abstraction, and the tyranny that he seeks liberation from is not the tyranny of men, but the tyranny of God. In this sense, warfare, as a means of attaining the glory necessary to free men from the tyranny of Christian morality, becomes expressed in the form of the Romanesque imperialism.⁷ In contrast to the Straussian approach to understanding Machiavelli's relationship to Rome, Patrick J. Coby emphasizes the antiquity of Machiavelli's political thought. For Coby, 'Machiavelli is more Roman than modern, and that impressions of newness derive from

⁵ Sullivan, Vickie B. (1996). *Machiavelli's Three Romes: Religion, Liberty and Politics Reformed*. DeKalb, Northern Illinois University Press.

⁶ Ibid. Pg. 6.

⁷ Sullivan, Vickie B. (2004). *Machiavelli, Hobbes, and the formation of a liberal republicanism in England*. Cambridge, UK ; New York, Cambridge University Press.

the fact that liberty and greatness, Machiavelli's twin objectives, occasionally appear in modern guise, as enlightened and unenlightened acquisitiveness respectively'.⁸

David Armitage presents discussion of the significance of Roman republicanism on the political thought of Machiavelli that addresses the problems between republican liberty and the 'greatness' of the republic. The republican dilemma, according to David Armitage, lies in the tenuous relationship between liberty and empire in republican political thought.⁹ Machiavelli, drawing on the works of Sallust, provided perhaps the most insightful – and no doubt the most influential – analysis of this tension.¹⁰ Greatness (*grandezza*) is based upon the establishment of republican liberty, and greatness in turn, is crucial to the maintenance of republican liberty and republican constitutions. Both are mutually reinforcing and necessary. But in greatness lies the seeds of the destruction of republican liberty itself. Using the history of Rome as the basis of his analysis, Machiavelli argues that the greatness of Rome was established through the overthrow of the Tarquins and the establishment of republican institutions to safeguard the liberty of 'the people'. With greatness came territorial expansion, and in order to maintain this expansionary dynamic, the Romans armed the plebs and allowed foreigners to be citizens. The unintended result of this was an increase in social unrest and 'tumults' in the republic. Such internal discord reached its height under the dictatorships of Sulla and Marius, as well as the rule of the Gracchi. Prolonged social discord laid the foundations for the destruction of republican liberty, personified by Julius Caesar, and the establishment of empire. What distinguishes Machiavelli's interpretation of the decline

⁸ Coby *Machiavelli's Romans: Liberty and Greatness in the Discourses on Livy*. Pg. 11.

⁹ Armitage 'Empire and Liberty: A Republican Dilemma'.

¹⁰ On the relationship between Sallust and Machiavelli, see Fontana, Benedetto (2003). "Sallust and the Politics of Machiavelli." *History of Political Thought* 24(1).

of the Roman republic from Sallust's, argues Armitage, is that Machiavelli claims that it is

impossible for any state to avoid the compulsions of expansion, and hence to escape the loss of its liberty. Rome could never have achieved *grandezza* without instituting the practical measures that had led to internal dissension and hence to the destruction of its republican liberty, likewise, those states that did not follow the expansionist policies of the Romans rendered themselves vulnerable to conquest by others and would still lose their liberty as their competitors overran them in due course.¹¹

The dilemma that Machiavelli identifies stems from his assertion that although greatness leads to the overthrow of republican liberty, the alternative, mere preservation of republican liberty, also spells certain doom at the hands of foreign conquerors. Thus, a republic must choose between greatness *or* mere preservation: if a republic expands, it most certainly will degenerate into an empire; if it seeks to preserve its liberty through internal stability, it will eventually fall prey to aggressive enemies. Choosing the path of greatness, Machiavelli thus seeks to reconcile greatness with liberty. This is the dilemma: how is republican liberty maintained in a context of necessary territorial expansion?

The bulk of Machiavelli's political thought is concerned with this problem, both at the level of domestic politics and the level of international relations. At the domestic level, Machiavelli was prepared to accept the inevitability of class conflicts, and he was prepared to recognize their role in maintaining the internal vitality of the republic insofar as they were channelled through republican institutions and did not degenerate into

¹¹ Armitage 'Empire and Liberty: A Republican Dilemma'. Pg. 31.

private violence and factional struggles.¹² At the domestic level, the maintenance of republican liberty is based upon the existence and management of class struggles within the city state.¹³ As many commentators have pointed out, part of Machiavelli's originality lies in his embrace of the inevitability of class conflict within society. Moving beyond the classical concerns on stability, concord and unity, Machiavelli argues that publicly oriented class conflict is crucial to the maintenance of the very republican institutions that protect republican liberty. At the same time, the natural ambitions of men, and the need to placate the interests of the competing classes within civil society requires the republic to channel that conflict and direct it outward in a vigorous and virtuous foreign policy of territorial expansion.

At the level of international relations, Machiavelli discusses three forms of territorial expansion. The first is what he calls a league of several republics together, in which none is greater in rank or authority than the others. The Athens represents an historical example of this form of league of equal nations/republics. In the Italian context, the ancient Tuscans adopted this mode of expansion. The second mode of expansion is through the subjugation of other peoples. 'Of these three modes,' Machiavelli says, 'the last is entirely useless...For taking care of governing cities by violence, especially those accustomed to living freely, is a difficult and laborious thing.'¹⁴ This mode takes too much military effort. The third mode of expansion is through the creation of an unequal league of states or republics. This form of

¹² Brudney, Kent M. (1984). "Machiavelli on Social Class and Class Conflict." *Political Theory* 12(4): 507-519, Bock, Gisela (1990). 'Civil Discord in Machiavelli's 'Istoria Fiorentina'. *Machiavelli and Republicanism*. Bock, Gisela and Quentin Skinner. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, Fontana "Sallust and the Politics of Machiavelli."

¹³ McCormick, John P. (2003). "Machiavelli against Republicanism: on the Cambridge School's "Guicciardinian Moments"." *Political Theory* 31(5): 615-43.

¹⁴ Machiavelli, Niccolo (1996). *The Discourses of Livy*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. Pg. 136.

expansionist strategy represents the best mode of territorial expansion, and Machiavelli recommends that the Florentines follow the Roman example and adopt it this mode:

Since Rome, which is in the example of the second mode, did the one and the other, it therefore rose to such excessive power. Since it was alone in living thus, it was also alone in becoming so powerful. For it got many partners throughout all Italy who in many things lived with it under equal laws, and, on the other side, as was said above, it always reserved for itself the seat of empire and the title of command. So its partners came to subjugate themselves by their own labours and blood without perceiving it.¹⁵

The creation of an unequal league of states is the most effective and prudent form of maintaining the liberty of the republic for a number of reasons. First, it allows the inherent class conflicts within the republic to be channelled outward through foreign ventures and conquests, bringing some sense of cohesion to the social divisions inherent in the republic. Secondly, it prevents a republic from overtaxing by engaging in costly projects of overt military domination of other societies. And lastly, because it is an unequal league of state – the head of which would be Florence - it allows the republic to maintain a hegemonic position in the hierarchy of states, thereby allowing it to play one state off another in order to maintain its preservation and dominance in the international order, and therefore, its internal liberty. The republic could therefore expand and preserve its liberty at the same time. Yet, Machiavelli is aware that any reconciliation of this tension between greatness and liberty is eventually bound to collapse in on itself. Thus, the republican dilemma can only be managed for a period of time, it cannot be transcended. And it is this fact of the irreconcilable nature of republicanism and empire that poses the problem for republican politics.

¹⁵ Ibid.

While it is indisputable that Machiavelli relies on an understanding of Roman history to inform his understanding of the problems facing republican politics, it is not enough to explain the significance of Machiavelli's political thought. Many other republican writers were reading the same Roman histories as Machiavelli, yet coming to the opposite conclusions than he. By situating Machiavelli's appropriation of the Roman model of republican 'imperialism' within the context of the inter-relationship between Florentine republican politics and the dynamic of commercial expansion at the heart of the Florentine economy can we come to a better appreciation of Machiavelli's political thought.

Guild Politics and Florentine Commercial Expansion

In order to appreciate the significance of Machiavelli's political thought, his appeal to Roman history, and his approach to the problems of liberty and empire, we need to situate Machiavelli in the context of Renaissance Florence. This process of historical contextualization must take into account the relationship between the process of state formation and international relations. Different sets of social property relations not only result in the formation of different forms of states, but also different strategies of 'international action' by those particular states.¹⁶ In other words, in order to understand the specificity of Machiavelli's political thought, we need to understand the ways in which the social property relations of Florence condition both its state form as well as its

¹⁶ Teschke, Benno (2002). "Theorizing the Westphalian System of States: International Relations from Absolutism to Capitalism." *European Journal of International Relations* 8(1): 5-48, Teschke, Benno (2003). *The myth of 1648 : class, geopolitics, and the making of modern international relations*. London, Verso.

politics of commercial expansion, because only then can we have an historically specific understanding of the political problems that Machiavelli is trying to resolve.

As a pre-capitalist commercial republic, the social property relations that underlay the Florentine state were characterized by a fusion between the economic and the political spheres of social life that assumed the form of a distinctive set of politically constituted forms of private property through which the Florentine ruling class extracted the surplus product of the direct producers through the exercise of ‘extra-economic’ forms of surplus extraction. Ellen Wood has recently described this:

In non-capitalist societies, it is not usually difficult to identify the locus of power. Find the source of military and political coercion and you will generally find economic power too. Here, the economic powers of dominant class depend on ‘extra-economic’ coercion. Such classes rely on their superior coercive force, on their political and military power and privilege, to extract surplus labour, typically from peasants who, unlike capitalist wage labourers, remain in possession of the means of production, either as owners or as tenants. Capitalism is different, and distinct from all other class societies in this respect. Capitalists – unlike, say, feudal lords – generally need to direct control of coercive military or political force to exploit their workers, because workers are propertyless, with no direct access to the means of production, and must sell their labour power in exchange for a wage in order to work and to live.¹⁷

The guild system lay at the heart of both the form of the republican state – in the sense of institutionalizing a hierarchy of political representation – and the political economy of the commercial republic. The guilds served to regulate economic activity by limiting the number of merchants engaged in a particular form of commerce, or by restricting the number of tradesmen allowed to perform a particular craft. Given that merchants reaped profits through a process of buying cheap and selling dear – profit on alienation – they

¹⁷ Wood, Ellen Meiksins (2003). *Empire of Capital*. London, Verso. Pg. 10.

had an interest in restricting the amount of commercial activity in order to prevent oversupply of goods in particular markets; a phenomenon that would drive prices down. Similarly, craftsmen had an interest of controlling the labour market in skilled labour in order to ensure high levels of craftsmanship and value for their goods. At the same time, the guilds formed the basis of political representation; to be a citizen required participation in a guild. A hierarchy of guilds was established in order to allow the ruling class to maintain its power over the lower classes in Florentine society. In order to overcome the privatized relations of fealty, loyalty and privilege that characterized the feudal era, the guild system was expanded.

In Florence, after the collapse of the Medicean regime in 1494, republicans set up a *governo largo* – a relatively broader based republican regime than that found in Venice – by extending the bounds of citizenship to the opponents of the Medici's as well as their former supporters. This in fact became the cornerstone of the republic.

The *uomini principali* tended to diminish the original political meaning of the Council – the broadening of Florentine citizenship – by stressing the pivotal role of the senate in governing the republic. They were driven to regard the Council with favour in the belief that this institution was the only constitutional check on a private citizen whose political ambition could prove to be harmful to the freedom of the city. The need for Florentine republicans to clarify this case spurred them to think and write about politics with as much vigour as they could. Their fight, political and ideological as well, had a common target: Medicean lordship over Florence, which would have transformed Florentine citizens of any social status into subjects. The Consiglio Maggiore was a safeguard against this danger. Being *signore*, the Council, by preventing any private citizen from usurping power in the republic, promoted a sort of 'equality' among the city's citizens which alone would have been the basis of the republic.¹⁸

¹⁸ Silvano, Giovanni (1990). 'Florentine Republicanism in the Sixteenth Century'. *Machiavelli and Republicanism*. Bock, Gisela, Quentin Skinner and Maurizio Viroli. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. Pg. 69-70.

With the re-establishment of the republic in 1494, the need to offset the quasi-feudal relations of fealty and dependence that buttressed the lord-like power of the Medici's necessitated the expansion of citizenship through the establishment of the *consiglio maggiore*. It was believed that the sort of 'equality' established by *governo largo* would reduce the propensity for factionalism and destroy the basis of Medicean patronage. As Silvano points out, republicanism 'became a political answer to the fear that someone – whether Medicean or not is less important here – might take over the state as his own possession.'¹⁹ However, given the relationship between guild membership and citizenship, and the role of the guilds in organizing the economic relationships at the base of the republic, the opening up of republican government posed problems of its own.

So herein lay the contradiction of the Florentine republic – the existence of guilds, as a form of politically constituted property, served to expand the auspices of the republican state while at the same time serving as a means to further the kinds of competition and factionalism that plagued Florence. Thus, the 'larger role given the guilds made Florentine republicanism more disorderly but also more democratic than the republicanism of Venice.'²⁰ It is not merely a matter of the Florentine state not being 'modern' in the sense that an abstract conception of state power transcended the contingent power of particular 'governments' because political theorist had not yet discovered the concept of the modern state.²¹ Rather, the Florentine state as characterized by a fusion of the economic and the political which prevented the separation of political power from state power. The fusion of economic activity with political representation

¹⁹ Ibid. Pg. 70.

²⁰ Lane, Frederick C. (1966). "At the Roots of Republicanism." *The American Historical Review* 71(2): 403-20. Pg. 410.

²¹ Silvano 'Florentine Republicanism in the Sixteenth Century'.

made economic competition spill over into the public realm, and political issues ultimately took on an economic character. It may be going too far to say, as Lane does, that Florentine politics *appeared* to be dominated by class conflicts over economic issues, for in fact class politics was ultimately economic *and* political in a way that they are not under capitalism.²² Thus, the crushing of the lower artisanal classes in the aftermath of the revolt of the Ciompi increased the strength of the merchant and ruling classes; but given the guild basis of economic competition in the republic, this competition ultimately revolved around the nature of the state *and* assumed a factional character.²³ Thus, as Lane points out, 'each generation of "new men" were the champions of the sovereign state against special privilege.'²⁴

The tension that resulted from the political and economic functions of the guilds was exacerbated by the crucial role that commercial activity played in the social reproduction of the city-state itself. While each city-state had managed to subjugate its own *contado*, or peripheral hinterland, the extent of these territorial acquisitions was minimal and the strength of its domination was often quite tenuous.²⁵ As a result, the city-states depended upon their commercial position within what was a series of fragmented markets of production and exchange in what was essentially a European feudal system. This mercantile nature of the Italian city-states had a determining effect

²² Lane "At the Roots of Republicanism." Pg. 411.

²³ Leibovici, Martine (2002). "From Fight to Debate: Machiavelli and the Revolt of the Ciompi." *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 28(6).

²⁴ Lane "At the Roots of Republicanism." Pg. 411.

²⁵ The Commune's power over the *contado* often assumed the form of pacts with the various 'feudal' lords that dominated the rural areas. Benefices and other forms of privilege were bestowed upon them that served to buttress their extra-economic power over rural producers. As a result, many scholars have referred to this as a condition of 'dualism' in which the power of the city over the country-side represented a decentralized network of power relations inimical to the development of a centralized state in the Weberian sense. See Guarini, E. Fasano (1995). "Center and Periphery." *The Journal of Modern History* 67(Supplement: The Origins of the State in Italy, 1300-1600): S74-S96.

on both their internal political stability as well as their geo-political relations. According to Rosenberg,

because their extreme urban definition was precisely a measure of their necessary institutional subtraction from the rural feudalism which they serviced, territorial expansion was not a natural avenue of growth, and always carried the danger of providing geopolitical stability only at the expense of republican autonomy. In practice, predominantly urban social orders of this kind, cut off from the wider seigniorial political command over resources of productive and military manpower, were historically unstable as independent states. Purchasing the military services of local feudatories thus became the prelude to accepting the takeover of Communal institutions by a noble landed family.²⁶

Commercial expansion in Florentine republic, like in all guild-based forms or pre-capitalist commercial activity, pitted factions against factions. However, the specific institutionalization of guilds within the republican state made for a particularly precarious situation. It is in this sense that Machiavelli's dilemma makes sense – *grandezza*, or greatness, in the form of external expansion (in the case of Florence, this expansion would be commercial), results in the very condition that serves to undermine republican liberty: factionalism provides the pretext for the rise of the *signori* and the overthrow of the republican constitution. Empire is thus incompatible with republicanism.

Conclusion: Liberty and Empire in Historical Context

In this sense, one of the many things that make Machiavelli so significant is that he was one of the few republicans to notice the so-called republican dilemma.²⁷ While most

²⁶ Rosenberg, Justin (1994). *The Empire of Civil Society*. London, Verso. Pg. 74.

²⁷ For a discussion of republican disagreement with Machiavelli's treatment of republicanism and empire, see Armitage.

republicans were embracing the virtues of wealth and accumulation through the discursive paradigm of humanism²⁸ (which represented a break from medieval conceptions towards the virtues of poverty), Machiavelli was one of the few republicans who recognized the contradictions between Florence's preoccupation with accumulation and trade, and the downfall of republican politics.²⁹ It is not so much the struggle *between* classes that poses the problem for Machiavelli; in fact he sees class conflict, if channelled through the proper institutions, as being vital to the maintenance of the republic. The problem for Machiavelli, is the factionalism inherent in the mercantile political economy of Florence, for given the specific nature of the pre-capitalist social property relations of the guild economy, it is this that threatens to bring down the republican constitution and result in the emergence of empire. Given the inherent relationship between external commercial expansion and internal domestic instability, it is perhaps not surprising that Machiavelli, the author of *The History of Florence* as well as the *Discourses*, so despised the merchant classes so much. It is therefore significant that Machiavelli places little emphasis on commercial values as a means of maintaining republican liberty. Hence, his discussion on territorial expansion has little to say about the role of commerce. In fact, for Machiavelli, Florence's fixation on commercial activity seems to be part of the problem, given that much of the factionalism in the city is

²⁸ For the argument that republican notions of civic virtue were largely compatible with the private pursuit of commercial wealth, see Jurdjevic "Virtue, Commerce and the Enduring Florentine Republican Moment: Reintegrating Italy into the Atlantic Republican Debate." This contradicts Pocock's classic opposition between republicanism and the rise of 'commercial' society. Pocock, J. G. A. (1975). *The Machiavellian moment: Florentine political thought and the Atlantic republican tradition*. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press.

²⁹ Skinner, Quentin (1978). *The foundations of modern political thought*. Cambridge ; New York, Cambridge University Press 1978. For a discussion on republicanism, humanism and wealth, see volume 1.

rooted in the commercial guilds. As Jurdjevic has pointed out in an insightful study of Florentine republicanism:

Machiavelli's pessimistic republican paradox – that to survive, republics must expand, but in expansion lay the roots of decay – was a conscious rejection of fifteenth-century humanist celebration and defence of Florence's rapid territorial expansion and imperialist triumph.³⁰

Indeed, one of Machiavelli's critics, a Venetian named Paulo Paruto, chastised Machiavelli for neglecting the significance of commercial activity for the maintenance of the republic. Yet, the difference between Machiavelli and Paruto can perhaps be best understood in the differences between Florentine and Venetian republicanism. The expansion of trade was received differently in Venice than it was in Florence. In Venice, the Venetian ruling class were able to absorb the rising merchant class into the existing structures of republicanism without giving rise to the outbreak of factionalism and private violence. In contrast, the Florentine ruling class was less successful in its ability to deal with the rise of 'the popolo', thereby sparking off generations of factional strife and private violence that concerned Machiavelli in all of his writings.³¹ Thus, the differences between Machiavelli's republicanism and Paruto's revolve around the specific relationship between the social property relations of the republic and the state. Machiavelli's elaboration of the republican dilemma, therefore, is perhaps specific to the social context of pre-capitalist societies in general, and Renaissance Florence in

³⁰ Jurdjevic "Virtue, Commerce and the Enduring Florentine Republican Moment: Reintegrating Italy into the Atlantic Republican Debate." Pg. 728.

³¹ Lane "At the Roots of Republicanism."

particular.³² The factionalism and private conflict that he saw as opening the way to the re-establishment of the Principate and the emergence of empire, was rooted in the social organisation of the Florentine economy and the social conflicts that ensued.³³

Machiavelli's elaboration of the republican dilemma, therefore, is perhaps specific to the social context of pre-capitalist societies in general, and Renaissance Florence in particular. The factionalism and private conflict that he saw as opening the way to the re-establishment of the Principate and the emergence of empire, was rooted in the social organisation of the Florentine economy and the social conflicts that ensued.³⁴ Within this context Machiavelli finds an historical parallel in the kinds of intra-class violence of republican Rome. Despite the historical differences between the two republics, Machiavelli finds enough in common for Rome's decline to serve as a cautionary tale for Florentine republicans.

The significance of this is that it problematizes the attempts by some scholars to present Machiavelli as the originator of a timeless dilemma between liberty and imperialism that exists at the heart of republicanism. To portray him in such a way neglects to take into account the historically specific ways in which republics in the early modern era were organized. In other words, not all republics, and therefore, not all republicans, experienced the tension between republicanism and liberty in the same way. Many English republicans, for example, believed that Machiavelli was wrong in his juxtaposition of republican liberty and empire. In a changing context of overseas

³² To make this claim would therefore inquire into the significance of Venice. Perhaps Venice represents an uncharacteristically static form of commercial republicanism, one that was unique in the Renaissance period the therefore the object of emulation.

³³ For more on Machiavelli and class conflict in Florence, see Brudney "Machiavelli on Social Class and Class Conflict.", Bock 'Civil Discord in Machiavelli's 'Istoria Fiorentina'".

³⁴ For more on Machiavelli and class conflict in Florence, see Brudney "Machiavelli on Social Class and Class Conflict.", Bock 'Civil Discord in Machiavelli's 'Istoria Fiorentina'".

expansion and domestic politics, empire came to mean something entirely different than what it meant for Machiavelli, and increasingly, empire – once the antithesis of liberty – became the means of its fulfilment.³⁵

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³⁵ Onuf, Peter S. and Cathy Matson (1985). "Toward a Republican Empire: Interest and Ideology in Revolutionary America." *American Quarterly* **37**(4): 496-531, Walling, Karl-Friedrich (1999). *Republican empire : Alexander Hamilton on war and free government*. Lawrence, Kan., University Press of Kansas.

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