

The State Writ Large: Machiavelli's Defence of Property as Civic Virtue and War Necessity

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Abstract: *The tension between individual acquisition and collective survival remains a paradox of political thought, particularly within the context of the Italian Renaissance. Here, Niccolo Machiavelli's defence of private property is examined as an adaptation within the framework of Plato's "State Writ Large" analogy. Machiavelli theorizes an organic state whose survival depends on its constituent parts – the citizens. By analyzing The Prince, The Discourses on Livy, and The Art of War, this research demonstrates that Machiavelli's protection of property (patrimony) is not a precursor to liberal rights, but a pragmatic necessity for fostering civic virtue (virtù) and military reliability. This study argues that property acts as the pivot to maintain state stability. The property–virtue nexus provides the foundation for the citizen-soldier model, which Machiavelli identifies as the only reliable defence against foreign empires and mercenary corruption. Also, to illustrate how the state's emergency mobilization of resources is justified as a macrocosmic act of self-defence, the research explores the Doctrine of Necessity. Ultimately, this research synthesises a model of an armed republic, where the security of private assets offers a mechanism to ensure the sovereignty and internal stability of the organic state.*

Keywords: Niccolo Machiavelli, State Writ Large, Patrimony, Civic Virtue, and War Necessity.

1. Introduction

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469 – 1527 CE) is a Florentine diplomat, author, philosopher, as well as historian who lived during the Italian Renaissance. The political landscape of Florentine is defined not by stability but by a precarious existence between internal factionalism and the looming threat of foreign empires. It is within this crucible of chaos that Niccolò Machiavelli formulates a political theory that seeks to transform the fragile city-state into a durable armed republic in "*The Art of War*"^{[1][2]}. An analysis of military organization, strategy, and the intrinsic relationship between war and politics is presented by *The Art of War*. It is in *The Art of War* that Machiavelli puts up the defence of private property as civic virtue and war necessity^{[3][4]}.

Now, Plato (428 – 348 BCE) – the ancient Greek philosopher and teacher – propounds the foundational concept of "State Writ Large". The "State Writ Large" philosophy in Book II of *The Republic* details that the state is not just a legal contract but a living entity with its own body and soul. In his ideal city (*Kallipolis*), Plato argues that if the citizens (body) are well-educated and virtuous, then the need for legal contracts with the ruler (soul) remains minimal^[5]. According to Plato's idealistic thoughts, virtue makes laws and property protection secondary. Plato believes that a virtuous citizen doesn't need a stake in the land to be loyal; they are loyal because they are virtuous^[6]. But, Machiavelli – commonly perceived as a brute realist who prioritizes power, statecraft, and necessity over moralistic views – departs from Plato's emphasis on virtuous citizens for a stable city-state^[7]. In *The Art of War*, Machiavelli explicitly notes that men who have a home and a vocation make the best soldiers because they have something real to return to^[8]. Machiavelli argues that allowing private property for the commoners creates the unity needed for war. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli treats the city-state not merely as a legal construct but as a living being whose health depends on the *virtù* (civic virtue) of its constituent parts^[9]. The survival of a city-state alongside a committed citizenry requires mobilization of vast resources in existential war

threats' face. But, the seizure of property often alienates the citizenry and damages the domestic stability that the state seeks to maintain. In the context of the Italian Renaissance, this tension is exacerbated by a transition from feudal fragmentation to centralized statehood. If the State is too weak to protect property, then it falls to foreign empires; if it is too aggressive in taking property for its own defence, then it triggers internal rebellion.

Here, the central conflict addressed is the tension between individual acquisition and collective survival. As per this paper, Machiavelli's defence of private property is not a precursor to liberal individualism established by the Lockean natural rights but is instead a strategic necessity for state survival. For Machiavelli, property functions as the psychological and material perpetuator of the state. A citizen with a secure stake in the land – his patrimony – is a citizen with a vested interest in the state's survival. Conversely, a state that violates the property of its subjects poisons its own cells by breeding resentment that leads to domestic volatility and foreign subversion. This research explores how Machiavelli utilizes the "Doctrine of Necessity" to bridge the gap between respecting private property and the occasional demand of the state to mobilize resources for war. Machiavelli – in *The Prince* as well as *The Discourses on Livy* – views the State as a macrocosmic extension of the individual; just as a man possesses a natural impulse to defend his life and home, the State possesses a legitimate right to defend its territory and resources^{[9][10]}.

This study seeks to answer the following questions to explore Machiavellian justification of the state's actions during wartime.

Research Questions

- To what extent does Machiavelli theorize the protection of private property not as a moral obligation but as the essential psychological prerequisite for fostering civic virtue and state stability?
- In what ways does Machiavelli adapt the Platonic analogy of "State Writ Large" to justify the state's behaviour as an

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organic entity with a legitimate right to self-defence? How does Machiavelli interpret this analogy as a macrocosmic extension of the individual's impulse to protect their own life and property?

- How does the "Doctrine of Necessity" in *The Art of War* and *The Discourses on Livy* reconcile the tension between the state's preservation of individual property and its occasional requirement to seize or mobilize private resources for collective military survival?
- How does the interdependence of property security and military readiness formulate a compelling model of state sovereignty that achieves independence from both foreign influence and domestic volatility?

Objectives

Based on the identified research questions, the study has constructed the following objectives for analysis:

- To deconstruct how Machiavellian views private property as a natural right, or as a moral obligation of the state, or as a strategic requirement.
- To interrogate the Machiavellian "Man Writ Large" as a pragmatic adaptation of the Platonic theory of Organic State.
- To evaluate the "Doctrine of Necessity" as a bridge between individual property and state militarism.
- To synthesize a model of the armed republic based on mutual preservation.

The following literature review evaluates the traditional interpretations of Machiavellian realism by providing a comparison of the existing schools of thought. This literature review aims to identify the gaps in the scholarly discourses and to construct a detailed framework for the study.

2. Literature Review

This literature review categorizes existing scholarship into three schools – Utilitarian Realism, Civic Humanism, and Pragmatic Organicism – to highlight the gaps this study intends to fill regarding the Machiavellian version of "State Writ Large".

2.1 The Utilitarian Realist School

Traditional realist interpretations, pioneered by scholars like Leo Strauss as well as Harvey Mansfield, argued that Machiavelli's concern for private property was rooted solely in the avoidance of political turmoil. This view treats property not as a right in the modern liberal sense, but as a practical limit on the prince's power. Strauss emphasizes Machiavelli's observation in *The Prince* (Chapter 19) that a ruler must abstain from the property of his subjects to avoid being hated, as this hatred was the primary cause for subversion and state instability ^[11] ^[12]. Although this school identifies the pragmatic nature of Machiavellian policy, it views property as a static constraint rather than an active component for the state's military vitality. It treats the prince's respect for the subject's patrimony as not out of moral conviction but to ensure personal survival. This study moves beyond the defensive utility of private property to explore its role as the enabler for military mobilization.

2.2 The Civic Humanist School

Scholars like J.G.A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner, contextualized Machiavelli within the tradition of classical republicanism. The understanding of property as a facilitator of *virtù* is created by Pocock's *Machiavellian Moment*. This school argues that property is essential because it provides the citizen with material independence. Correspondingly, this school believes that economic self-sufficiency functions as the prerequisite for political agency of men; it also ensures that the soldier's sword is drawn for the collective survival of the state rather than the private interests of a feudal lord ^[13] ^[14]. The Civic Humanists think: "only a man with something to lose (land) has a rational and emotional incentive to fight in a citizen militia (*ordinanza*)". While research aligns with the Pocockian view of independence, scholars fail to explain how this individual independence is theoretically reconciled with the state's organic right to seize resources under the Doctrine of Necessity.

2.3 The Pragmatic Organicist School

Scholars like Mark Hulliung suggested that Machiavelli subverted Plato's views rather than rejecting them entirely, although Machiavelli's works were thought of as departing radically from the imagined republics of Plato. In *The Republic*, Plato utilizes the State Writ Large analogy to argue for a communal existence, where the ruling class owns nothing, which ensures their total devotion to the soul of the city-state ^[15]. Machiavelli, in *The Discourses*, describes the state's growth and decay in biological terms using the body politic metaphor ^[16]. However, there is a lack of focus on how Machiavelli's organic state is sustained by the collective impulse of the citizens' self-defence.

2.4 The Doctrine of Necessity and Resource Mobilization

More recent scholarship, led by Christopher Lynch, argued that Machiavelli's militarism was not merely a preference for violence. It was viewed as a pragmatic response to the economically parasitic and politically unreliable *condottieri* (mercenary system). Hörnqvist, in particular, illustrated how Machiavelli's imperial ambitions required a stable citizen-centric domestic base ^[17]. Yet, there is a lack of inquiry into how the state's territorial sovereignty is treated as the macro-equivalent of a citizen's patrimony.

Also, scholarship on the Doctrine of Necessity (*ragion di stato*) by Friedrich Meinecke and later Maurizio Viroli focused on the ruler's permission to bypass moral laws, such as lying, killing, or breaking treaties, to save the state ^[18] ^[19]. There is less focus on how necessity justifies the link between the state's macro-survival and the individual's micro-assets. By analysing *The Art of War*, this study identifies a theoretical bridge, where the state's seizure of resources is justified as a macrocosmic act of self-defence.

2.5 Synthesis of Research Gaps

The scholarly works on Machiavelli prolong a persistent tension between his reputation as a "teacher of evil" (Strauss) and a "champion of liberty" (Skinner). Nevertheless, as per a closer look at the Civic Humanist and Utilitarian Realist

schools, the state preservation was inextricably related to the economic stability of its constituents. Utilitarians focus on the Prince's survival and the Civic Humanists focus on the citizen's moral agency, but neither explores the Macrocosmic Analogy: the idea that the state behaves as a "Man Writ Large" with an organic necessity to defend its patrimony (sovereignty and territory).

2.6 Existing Research Works

^[19] suggested that Machiavelli wasn't an amoral thinker but a proponent of a morality rooted in civic virtue rather than Christian ethics. ^[20] argued that Machiavellian virtue was a pragmatic synthesis of strategic skill and decisiveness used to counteract the unpredictability of circumstances (*Fortuna*). Moreover, ^[21] argued that Machiavelli's political methods, often labelled as brutally realistic, were actually intended for the security of the city and the preservation of the republic. Further, ^[22] identified the state's duty to determine the aptitude of its citizens (military vocation) to achieve the supreme goal of the state. Plato's "State Writ Large" was a metaphysical ideal, where justice maintained the health of the soul (the ruler). Nevertheless, Machiavelli adapted this to say that the state was a living entity that must be organized well from the beginning to avoid decay ^[23]. Apart from this, ^[24] ^[25] had given a brief on the citizen-soldier model of Machiavelli. However, the examination of existing literature revealed that research on "Machiavelli's Defence of Property as Civic Virtue and War Necessity" was not available as forms of direct interpretations of the topic.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Here, it adopts a qualitative (Hermeneutic) research design. This approach is appropriate due to the interpretative nature of political philosophy, which requires an examination of nuance, historical intent, and the evolution of political concepts ^[26] ^[27]. Rather than a quantitative survey of historical data, this design focuses on contextual analysis to explore the underlying logic in the concepts of property and necessity across Machiavelli's works. This approach is necessary to explore how Machiavelli's contradictory stances of protecting private property while demanding military duty are reconciled through the "State Writ Large" analogy.

3.2 Primary and Secondary Sources

The foundation of this research is a triad of Machiavelli's seminal works, which are contrasted against the foundational framework of Plato. The study focuses on specific chapters, where the intersection of property, military necessity, and organic state is most concentrated.

- 1) **Machiavelli's *The Prince*:** The English version translated by Luigi Ricci helps in understanding Machiavelli's advice for Princes. The reading focuses on Chapters XV through XIX. These chapters are vital as they map the virtues of a ruler. The chapters of this book provide the logic for the ruler to respect private property, i.e., to avoid contempt and hatred.
- 2) **Machiavelli's *The Discourses on Livy*:** Ninian Hill Thomson's English version of the book is selectively read

for the particular analysis of the "Doctrine of Necessity". Book I (Chapters 1-6 and 34) along with Book II (Chapters 1-3) discuss the Roman Dictatorship and the legitimate suppression of ordinary laws for state survival, assisting in understanding the doctrine.

- 3) **Machiavelli's *The Art of War*:** The research focuses on Book I and Book II of the English translated version of Henry Neville. These sections are considered essential as the contents contain Machiavelli's most direct arguments for the *ordinanza* (citizen militia). A careful reading of these sections helps reason why a man with a home and vocation contributes to military loyalty.
- 4) **Plato's *The Republic*:** A quick reading of the dialogue between Plato and Socrates from Book II provides the necessary insight into the "State Writ Large" analogy. This assists in establishing the philosophical benchmark of the organic state, which Machiavelli later adapts into a realist model.

In addition to the primary texts, the study makes use of secondary sources to support the textual interpretation of those primary works. Secondary literature includes peer-reviewed articles, commentaries on websites, books, book reviews, and other related research papers published. The secondary sources illuminate the historical contexts that help to build arguments in this study.

3.3 Analytical Approach

The study adopts a thematic conceptual analysis. An analysis of this sort identifies four key themes to bridge individual property and state survival.

- The Machiavellian Idea of Property
- State as an Organic Entity
- The Doctrine of Necessity
- Sovereignty through Mutual Preservation

These themes are chosen as they can be seen as the logical way to build narratives and arrive at a conclusion.

3.4 Limitations

The qualitative nature of this study means it is an interpretation of political logic rather than an empirical study of the economics during the Italian Renaissance. Moreover, as a study in political theory, the primary consideration involves avoiding anachronism, i.e., the tendency to misplace people, ideas, or things to the wrong time period. The researcher must ensure that modern liberal definitions of property rights are not retroactively forced onto Machiavelli's 16th-century property security. Furthermore, while the "State Writ Large" is drawn from Plato (metaphysical), the study acknowledges that Machiavelli's use of it is pragmatic. This distinction is critical to the paper's integrity.

4. Analysis

4.1 The Machiavellian Idea of Property

Analysing Machiavelli's defence of private property becomes possible by reading his works with deeper thought. Examining three of Machiavelli's observations from *The*

Prince, The Art of War, and The Discourses on Livy reveals his perception of property and its relation to the state.

Property as the Foundation of Political Stability

"A prince... must above all things abstain from the property of others; because men sooner forget the death of their father than the loss of their patrimony" ^[9].

In *The Prince*, Chapter 17, Machiavelli identifies the protection of property not as a moral act, but as a strategic necessity to avoid the most dangerous political emotions: hatred and contempt ^[9].

Analysis of the quote: Machiavelli believes property (*patrimonio*) to be more sacred to an individual than one's family. To understand why Machiavelli considers property more sacred than the life of a parent, the perception of property (patrimony) during the Italian Renaissance must be known. Patrimony, during the Renaissance, is thought of as a shared, multi-generational family estate rather than just individual wealth. This family estate is often managed through a complex legal structure designed to preserve the family's reputation and status (*dignitas*) over time. Due to the prevalence of this cultural thought in Italy during the Renaissance, Machiavelli advises the Prince to respect the patrimony of his citizens. By doing so, the ruler ensures that the citizenry remains content and loyal. So, the first prerequisite for state stability is for the state not to act as a predator toward its own cells (citizens). Machiavelli treats the Prince not as the owner of the property but as someone who manages the state environment to survive. If the Prince violates the boundaries of individual patrimony, then he triggers a response – conspiracy and rebellion – that weakens the state's ability to resist foreign threats. The analysis of the quote reveals that Machiavelli treats private property not as a moral obligation of the state or an individual right, but as a necessary act to sustain state survival.

The Citizen-Soldier as a Stakeholder in Survival of the State

"For a man who has a property of his own has a greater interest in the preservation of the peace, and is more afraid of the consequences of a revolution, than he who has nothing to lose: and as it is necessary that a soldier should have some other trade or vocation to support him when he is not in the field, so it is as certain that he will be more likely to return to it when the war is over, than another who has no way of getting a livelihood but by plunder and rapine" ^[8].

From Machiavelli's *Art of War*, Book I, for the state to function as a stable organism, the soul (Prince) must recognize that the body (citizenry) is moved primarily by the instinct for material preservation, i.e., property and home ^[8].

Analysis of the quote: Machiavelli uses the possessive psychology of people's appetite for private property to create the public virtue of patriotism. For Machiavelli, a man without property is a man with nothing to lose but his life. During a conflict, such a man's instinct is to flee. However, a man with a home and a vocation possesses a strategic need to defend his propriety ^[25]. Machiavelli argues that the citizen-soldier is the only reliable defender of the state, as a citizen militia is motivated by their personal stake ^[24]. The property-owning citizens defend the state's borders because

Machiavelli perceives them as the macro-extension of the individuals' own fence. Machiavelli views this loyalty as actually a sophisticated form of self-interest. A deeper look into the quote suggests that Machiavelli transforms the private greed towards property into the public virtue of stability by linking the survival of the individual's "micro-state" (his home and trade) to the survival of the sovereign "macro-state". Conversely, Machiavelli views mercenaries (professional soldiers) as parasites who thrive on plunder and rapine.

Civic Virtue through Material Interest

"For it is not the individual's good, but the public good, that makes cities great... and it is the people's desire for the protection of their property and the security of their lives that makes them willing to live under the laws" ^[10].

Analysis of the quote: In this passage from *The Discourses*, Machiavelli departs from Plato's emphasis on virtuous citizens for creating the just city-state (Kallipolis) ^[10]. Machiavelli identifies the public good (*comune bene*) as a functional state of collective security and states that the civic virtues, like loyalty, respect for law, willingness to sacrifice, and so on, are a result of the state's respect for individual property. Machiavelli argues that the greatness of a city is a by-product of a social contract based on material interest, not as Plato envisioned it as a by-product of a moral and spiritual harmony among the citizens to achieve absolute justice. Thus, Machiavelli views property as a tool for civic agency – unlike the later liberal tradition of John Locke, which treats property as an end in itself. Moreover, the analysis reveals that:

- Citizens do not obey the state out of innate virtue. They do so because survival of the state acts as the ultimate assurance for their private holdings.
- Citizens' willingness to live under the laws is a rational trade-off between their total freedom and the state's guarantee that their property will not be stolen.
- If the state provides a safe environment for acquisition, then the citizens naturally support the state's existence to preserve their own wealth.

This quote proves that Machiavelli's defence of property is a strategic requirement for the perpetuation of the state. A state that can't protect the individual's good (property) fails to achieve the public good (state stability), as citizens have no incentive to maintain the laws or defend the borders.

From the above analysis of Machiavelli's thoughts, it becomes clear that the seizure of property is the most direct path to collective hatred. But how can the citizen-soldiers collectively participate in the survival of the state?

4.2 State as an Organic Entity

Machiavelli's adaptation of the Platonic soul is functional. Although Machiavelli adopts the Platonic "State Writ Large", the analogy is not a search for justice as in the case of Plato. Machiavelli portrays the state as a living organism whose primary functions are centered on survival. In *The Discourses on Livy*, Machiavelli's political theory adopts a biological character ^[10]. Machiavelli has portrayed the state as a living organism in his other works as well. By analysing Machiavelli's views on the state as an organic entity, the

study establishes a link between the collective participation of citizen-soldiers in the war and the survival of the state.

“Those who design that a city should have a great Empire, must with all their diligence endeavour to make it as full of inhabitants as they can: for without a great number of men, it will be impossible ever to make it great. This is done two ways, by love, and by force...”

For as a tree that has its branches bigger than its trunk, cannot support them, and the first high wind that blows, breaks it down; so, a Republic that conquers more than its body can bear, must of necessity be ruined” ^[10].

Analysis of the quote: Machiavelli, in *Discourses* Book II Chapter 3, adds to the state being a living entity by arguing that a state, like a tree, can't remain at a fixed size; it must either grow or wither ^[10]. He uses the Roman practice of adding to the body of the city (incorporating new territories) to argue that a state must expand its limbs (territories) to support the head (ruler). If the individual man must acquire resources to sustain his physical existence, then the state – as the “Man Writ Large” – must also acquire territory to sustain its political existence. Crucially, Machiavelli considers private property as the nutrient that thickens the trunk (the citizenry) of the tree (state). Without secure property, the citizens – the cells of the trunk – weaken, leaving the state's branches (foreign territories) vulnerable to the “high winds” of fortune and war.

“And as all human things are in motion and cannot remain fixed, they must either rise or fall; and many things that reason does not compel you to, necessity lends you to” ^[10].

In these sentences from *The Discourses*, Book I Chapter 6, Machiavelli compares the state to a living thing. By conceiving acquisition as a natural instinct rather than a moral choice, Machiavelli justifies the state's behaviour of expansion as a form of natural growth ^[10].

“In every city these two opposite humors are found... the people desire not to be commanded nor oppressed by the great, and the great desire to command and oppress the people” ^[9]

Analysis of the quotes: From an organic perspective, the subjects are the cells of the living organism (state). If the soul (the ruler) begins to consume the body (the citizen's assets), the organism effectively destroys its own structural integrity. This imbalance leads to *corrotto* – corruption – which in biological terms is necrosis (premature death). Moreover, Machiavelli discusses the internal humors (social classes) of the state – the tension betwixt the Great (*i grandi*) as well as the People (*il popolo*). He argues that if the humors are unbalanced by the Prince's greed, the state becomes corrupt (*corrotto*). A corrupt state is an organism whose parts no longer work for the whole, which renders it unable to coordinate an immune response against external pathogens (foreign empires). By framing the state's expansion as a biological necessity rather than a moral choice, Machiavelli justifies the state's appetite for territory.

Machiavelli further positions the Prince as a physician tasked with managing the state's vitality:

“...because at the beginning a disease is easy to cure but difficult to diagnose, but as time passes, not having been treated or recognized at the outset, it becomes easy to diagnose but difficult to cure” ^[9].

Analysis of the quote: Machiavelli suggests that the Prince must act as a physician for the body politic. A deeper interpretation of the quote gives the awareness that by respecting the property of the citizens, the Prince delivers the preventive medicine that ensures the body remains strong enough to survive the fever of war. But, if the Prince waits until the state is in a crisis to start respecting his citizens, the infection of hatred would have spread too far to be cured.

In *The Art of War* (Book 1), Machiavelli addresses the stereotype that property-owning men are too soft for war ^[8]. He argues that the soul (ruler) must create a system where the soldier's fear of losing his home is greater than his fear of the enemy. He writes that the best soldiers are those from well-ordered (governed by laws) places where they have a stake. By ensuring the body (citizens) is well-nourished through secure property rights, the soul (ruler) gains the authority to command that body into the life-threatening environment for battle. The citizen-soldier does not fight because he loves the Prince, but in turn because the Prince represents the nervous system that protects the soldier's own material stake in the world.

Ultimately, Machiavelli's adaptation of the “State Writ Large” is functional. Whereas for Plato, the soul (ruler) is the rational part that governs the appetite of the body (people). In Machiavelli's model, the soul (ruler) is considered to manage the appetitive hunger of the individual – their greed and desire for property into the spirited (*animazione*) energy of the state. Using the biological framework, Machiavelli's warning in *The Prince* (Chapter 19) against seizing property is not a defence of rights, but a warning against a political autoimmune disorder. He explicitly notes that a Prince becomes hated when he is a usurper of the property along with the women of his subjects. But, can the ruler justify the seizure of property of his subjects, all the while not inviting hate?

4.3 The Doctrine of Necessity

The Machiavellian organic model creates a potential paradox: if the state must never seize property to avoid necrosis (rebellion), how can it possibly fund the immense cost of existential warfare? Machiavelli resolves this through the Doctrine of Necessity (*necessità*). Under this framework, the state's temporary seizure of resources is not an act of predatory theft, but a macro-reflex for self-preservation.

In *The Discourses* (Book I, Chapter 34), Machiavelli examines the Roman institution of the Dictator to illustrate this point ^[10]. He argues that during times of war, the state must be able to act with speed and force that ordinary laws do not allow.

“For in a Republic where such a power is wanting, it must either be ruined by observing the laws, or break them to avoid its ruin” ^[10].

Analysis of the quote: From the “State Writ Large” perspective, this is equivalent to a biological organism entering a fight-or-flight state. During an emergency, the soul (the ruler) must be able to bypass the usual protections of property to ensure the survival of the body (the citizens). Machiavelli defends this by stating that a republic that cannot resort to extraordinary measures during a crisis will inevitably perish. The necessity here is a shared existential burden. When the state seizes horses, grain, or funds for a campaign, it is doing so to preserve the sovereign entity that protects the citizen’s home. Machiavelli’s logic is cold but consistent. A citizen cannot claim a right to property in a state that has been occupied by a foreign power. Therefore, the state’s interference with property during war is actually the ultimate service to property.

To prevent this doctrine from becoming a license for tyranny, Machiavelli draws a sharp line between strategic mobilization and tyrannical rapacity. In *The Prince* (Chapter 17), Machiavelli warns that a prince may act against a subject’s assets when there is proper justification along with manifest cause ^[9].

“A prince, therefore, must not mind the reproach of cruelty... for with a very few examples he will be more merciful than those who, through too much mercy, allow disorders to arise, from which follow murders or robberies” ^[9].

Analysis of the quote: When resources are taken under *necessità* for the common good (*bene comune*), it is a legitimate function of the organic state – a defensive reinvestment. However, when a ruler takes property to satisfy his personal *libidine* (lust or greed), Machiavelli is no longer acting as the soul of the state; he is acting as a parasite. Machiavelli uses the history of the Roman Agrarian Laws in *The Discourses* to show that when property is seized to satisfy factional greed rather than national survival, it leads to the destruction of the republic. The legitimacy of state action is thus tethered to the survival of the whole ^[10].

Also, in the 2nd book of *The Discourses*, Machiavelli addresses the reality that war is not made with gold, but with good soldiers. The necessity works because the property-owning citizen (*assidui*) understands that the state’s demand for a war tax is a defensive reinvestment ^[10].

“Common opinion affirms that money is the sinew of war. This opinion is altogether false... for it is not gold, but good soldiers that are the sinews of war: because gold is not sufficient to find good soldiers, but good soldiers are more than sufficient to find gold” ^[10].

Analysis of the quote: Machiavelli contrasts the citizen-soldier with the Italian *condottieri*, who view state property only as a source of rapine (plunder). Machiavelli suggests that the citizen-soldier is more willing to endure the necessity of resource loss because he has a vocation and a home to return to. By maintaining the property–civic virtue nexus, the state ensures that its cells (citizens) remain loyal even when the state must consume part of their wealth to survive. The Doctrine of Necessity, therefore, is not a violation of the organic state’s principles, but the mechanism that allows the organism (state) to survive a trauma (war). Ultimately,

Machiavelli justifies the state’s seizure of the property of the citizens by emphasizing mutual preservation of the citizen-soldier model. In *The Art of War*, Book I, Machiavelli argues:

“Where the citizens are not armed, and have no stake in the preservation of the state, it is impossible to remain independent” ^[8].

Therefore, the Doctrine of Necessity is not a violation of the organic state’s principles, but the mechanism that allows the “Man Writ Large” to protect its constituent parts from the challenges posed by foreign threats and to ensure its enduring sovereignty.

4.4 Sovereignty through Mutual Preservation

In the synthesis of the property-owning citizen and the state’s military independence, the convergence of Machiavelli’s theory is found. For Machiavelli, a state is only truly sovereign when it can defend itself without the use of auxiliary forces (mercenaries). This independence is premised on the military responsibility of the property-holder.

The military of the Roman Republic (509 – 27 BCE) is a classic example of the Machiavellian model. The foundational component of the Republic’s military is the property-owning citizen. Machiavelli notes in *The Art of War* that “it is never the intention of any wise law-giver that the exercise of war should be the only profession of any person” ^[8] because a man without a civil stake is a man without a moral compass. The Roman legionary (armed infantry) is composed of citizen-soldiers (*Assidui*) – citizens who owned enough property to be included in the tax classes – whose military effectiveness is a by-product of their private interests. The legionary’s loyalty is to his land (patrimony), and the mercenary’s loyalty is to the highest bidder.

Meanwhile, in *The Prince* (Chapter 12), Machiavelli analyses the collapse of Florence. In Chapter 12, he blames the collapse of Florence on the use of mercenaries.

“Mercenaries and auxiliaries are useless and dangerous; and if one holds his state based on these arms, he will stand neither tied nor safe; for they are disunited, ambitious, and without discipline, unfaithful... they have no other attraction or reason for keeping the field than a trifle of stipend” ^[9].

Unlike Rome, where the “State Writ Large” functions because everyone is a stakeholder, Florence is a collection of factions, where the wealthy people use the state to protect their private interests at the common good expense. Machiavelli also uses the examples of the Gracchi brothers and the Roman Agrarian Laws to show the “State Writ Large” in a state of decay. Once the commoners lost their stake in the land, their *virtù* withered. Their allegiance to the Roman state is lost. This creates an imbalance, where the body (the people) becomes hostile to the head (the senate), eventually leading to the civil wars of Caesar and Pompey.

In *The Prince* (Chapter 12) and throughout *The Art of War*, Machiavelli directs a critique toward the *condottieri* (mercenary captains). He views them as foreign bodies within the state organism. Mercenaries have no stake in the land;

their only interest is their salary. Consequently, they plunder the state in peace as the enemy does in war. In contrast, the property-owning soldier is a native cell. Machiavelli argues in *The Art of War* (Book I) that the ideal soldier is the one who is most willing to be a soldier, having most to lose by not being one.

“A man who has a house and a family is not easily persuaded to leave them... he is a much better and more useful soldier than a vagabond who has nothing to lose” [8].

Machiavelli did not merely theorise his model of the organic state. He attempts to implement it in Florence through the *Ordinanza* of 1506. He insists on recruiting from the rural districts (*Mugello* and *Casentino*) because these men are small-scale property owners with deep ties to the land. This creates the circular logic of defence:

- 1) The state protects the citizen's right to property.
- 2) Fuelled by this security, the citizen develops *virtù* (loyalty and courage).
- 3) The citizen joins the militia to protect the state that protects his property.
- 4) The state remains independent from foreign empires because it possesses a committed citizen-soldier system.

As Machiavelli concludes:

“Where the citizens are not armed, and have no stake in the preservation of the state, it is impossible for that state to remain independent” [8].

The state's legitimate right to defend its territory is drawn from the same rationale as the citizen's right to defend their home. By analysing the interdependence of property security and military readiness, this study reveals that Machiavelli's realism is not just about power for power's sake. It is about creating a stable organic entity, where the soul (the Prince) and the body (the people) are united by a common mutual interest. This balance prevents the domestic volatility that arises from state-sponsored arbitrary seizure and the foreign subversion that arises from military weakness. The property-owning citizen is the bridge that connects the private home to the sovereign state, ensuring that the “Man Writ Large” remains standing.

5. Conclusion

Here, this study demonstrated that Niccolo Machiavelli's defence of private property was not an argument for individual rights in the modern liberal sense, but a practical necessity for the survival of the state. Machiavelli transformed a metaphysical ideal into a pragmatic plan for state survival by adapting the Platonic “State Writ Large”. The strength and independence of the Machiavellian state were the outcome of a carefully maintained balance between the ruler's authority and the citizens' material security.

By acting as a political physician who maintained the health of the body politic, the ruler maintained the internal stability of the state. The burst of popular hatred and factionalism was prevented as the ruler abstained from the arbitrary seizure of property. Thus, the property of the state functioned as the nutrient that thickened the trunk of the state, ensuring that the

citizens, constituent cells of the organism, remained loyal and productive. Thus, this domestic balance created a state that was resilient against internal decay and civil wars, which was essential for long-term stability.

Through the citizen-soldier model that was fuelled by the property-virtue nexus, the state achieved independence from foreign influence. Citizens' defence of the state's borders was synonymous with a macro-extension of their instinct to defend their own homes as long as the citizens had a tangible stake in the land (patrimony). This connection to land eliminated the need for mercenaries (paid soldiers), who acted as parasites on the state's resources. During war or crisis, the state, through the Doctrine of Necessity, called for the mobilization of resources. Nevertheless, the property-owning citizens viewed the state's demand not as a predatory seizure but as a defensive reinvestment in the sovereign state that, in turn, guaranteed the citizens' private existence.

Eventually, as per Machiavelli's realism, a state was only truly sovereign when its soul (the ruler) and body (the citizens) were united by common mutual interest. When property was secure, civic virtue flourished; when civic virtue flourished, the state became capable of defending itself against foreign invasions. The “Man Writ Large” remained standing only when the limbs were strong, and those limbs were strong only when the citizens had a home to protect and a vocation to return to. Therefore, the protection of property was the ultimate act of statecraft – the mechanism that ensured the enduring independence of the sovereign state. Finally, this study concluded by mentioning that Machiavelli's defence of property functioned both as a civic virtue and a war necessity in a realistic state.

This study was limited by its qualitative hermeneutic design, which focused on political logic rather than the empirical economic data of Renaissance Italy. Future research will expand this framework by conducting a comparative analysis with the works of other thinkers to see how Machiavelli's property-militia nexus will evolve into modern republicanism. Moreover, quantitative studies on the economic impact of the 1506 *Ordinanza* could provide historical validation for Machiavelli's organic state theory.

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