

# Machiavelli the art of war

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Machiavelli\_0523 09/15/2005 09: 27 AM THE ONLINE LIBRARY OF LIBERTY © Liberty Fund, Inc. 2005 <http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/index.php> NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI, THE ART OF WAR (NEVILLE TRANS. ) (1675) URL of this E-Book: [http://oll.libertyfund.org/EBooks/Machiavelli\\_0523.pdf](http://oll.libertyfund.org/EBooks/Machiavelli_0523.pdf) URL of original HTML file: <http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/HTML.php?recordID=0523>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR Machiavelli was an Italian Renaissance political philosopher who wrote a famous piece of advice to The Prince on how to get and keep political power.

ABOUT THE BOOK A translation by Neville, a leading English republican thinker of the 17th century, of one of the few major works of Machiavelli published in his lifetime. Machiavelli drew on his own experiences of the nearly constant warfare in which the Italian city states were involved, as well as his deep knowledge of Roman history. THE EDITION USED The Seven Books on the Art of War, by Niccolo Machiavelli, Citizen and Secretary of Florence, trans. Henry Neville (1675). COPYRIGHT INFORMATION The text of this edition is in the public domain.

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<http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/EBook.php?recordID=0523> Page 1 of 106

Machiavelli\_0523 09/15/2005 09: 27 AM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE FIRST BOOK SECOND BOOK THIRD BOOK FOURTH BOOK FIFTH BOOK SIXTH BOOK SEVENTH BOOK

NICCOLO

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MACHIAVELLI, THE ART OF WAR (NEVILLE TRANS. ) (1675) PREFACE BY  
NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI CITIZEN AND SECRETARY OF FLORENCE ON THE  
BOOKS ON THE ART OF WAR TO LORENZO DI FILIPPO STROZZI, A  
GENTLEMAN OF FLORENCE Many, Lorenzo, have held and still hold the  
opinion, that there is nothing which has less in common with another, and  
that is so dissimilar, as civilian life is from the military.

Whence it is often observed, if anyone designs to avail himself of an  
enlistment in the army, that he soon changes, not only his clothes, but also  
his customs, his habits, his voice, and in the presence of any civilian custom,  
he goes to pieces; for I do not believe that any man can dress in civilian  
clothes who wants to be quick and ready for any violence; nor can that man  
have civilian customs and habits, who judges those customs to be effeminate  
and those habits not conducive to his actions; nor does it seem right to him  
to maintain his ordinary appearance and voice who, with his beard and  
cursing, wants to make other men afraid: which makes such an opinion in  
these times to be very true.

But if they should consider the ancient institutions, they would not find  
matter more united, more in conformity, and which, of necessity, should be  
like to each other as much as these (civilian and military); for in all the arts  
that are established in a society for the sake of the common good of men, all  
those institutions created to (make people) live in fear of the laws and of God  
would be in vain, if their defense had not been

vain, if their defense had not been provided for and which, if well arranged, will maintain not only these, but also those that are not well established.

And so (on the contrary), good institutions without the help of the military are not much differently disordered than the habitation of a superb and regal palace, which, even though adorned with jewels and gold, if it is not roofed over will not have anything to protect it from the rain. And, if in any other institutions of a City and of a Republic every diligence is employed in keeping men loyal, peaceful, and full of the fear of God, it is doubled in the military; for in what man ought the country look for greater loyalty than in that man who has to promise to die for her? In whom ought there to be a greater love of peace, than in him who can only be injured by war? In whom ought there to be a greater fear of God than in him who, undergoing infinite dangers every day, has more need for His aid?

If these necessities in forming the life of the soldier are well considered, they are found to be praised by those who gave the laws to the Commanders and by those who were put in charge of military training, and followed and imitated with all diligence by others. But because military institutions have become completely corrupt and far removed from the ancient ways, these sinister opinions have arisen which make the military hated and intercourse with those who train them avoided. And I, judging, by what I have seen and read, that it is not impossible to restore its ancient ways and return some form of past virtue to it, have decided not to let this leisure time of mine pass without doing something, to write what I know of the art of war, to the satisfaction of those who are lovers of the ancient deeds.

And although it requires courage to treat of those matters of which others have made a profession, none the less, I do not believe that it is a mistake to occupy a position with words, which may, with greater presumption, have been occupied with deeds; for the errors which I should make in writing can be corrected without injury to anyone, but those which are made with deeds cannot be found out except by the ruin of the Commanders. You, Lorenzo, will therefore consider the quality of these efforts of mine, and will give in your judgement of them that censure or praise which will appear to you to be merited. I send you these, as much as to show myself grateful for all the benefits I have received from you, although I will not include in them the (review) of this work of mine, as well as also, because being accustomed to honor similar works of those who shine because of their nobility, wealth, genius, and liberality, I know you do not have many equals in wealth and nobility, few in ingenuity, and no one in liberality. FIRST BOOK

As I believe that it is possible for one to praise, without concern, any man after he is dead since every reason and supervision for adulation is lacking, I am not apprehensive in praising our own Cosimo Rucelai, whose name is never remembered by me without tears, as I have recognized in him those parts which can be desired in a good friend among friends and in a citizen of his country. For I do not know what pertained to him more than to spend himself willingly, not excepting that courage of his, for his friends, and I do not know of any enterprise that dismayed him when he knew it was for the good of his country. And I confess freely not to <http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/EBook.php?recordID=0523> Page 3 of 106 Machiavelli\_0523 09/15/2005 09: 27 AM hat dismayed him when he knew it was for the good

of his country. And I confess freely not to have met among so many men whom I have known and worked with, a man in whom there was a mind more fired with great and magnificent things. Nor does one grieve with the friends of another of his death, except for his having been born to die young unhonored within his own home, without having been able to benefit anyone with that mind of his, for one would know that no one could speak of him, except (to say) that a good friend had died. It does not remain for us, however, or for anyone else who, like us, knew him, to be able because of this to keep the faith (since deeds do not seem to) to his laudable qualities.

It is true however, that fortune was not so unfriendly to him that it did not leave some brief memory of the dexterity of his genius, as was demonstrated by some of his writings and compositions of amorous verses, in which (as he was not in love) he (employed as an) exercise in order not to use his time uselessly in his juvenile years, in order that fortune might lead him to higher thoughts. Here, it can be clearly comprehended, that if his objective was exercise, how very happily he described his ideas, and how much he was honored in his poetry. Fortune, however, having deprived us of the use of so great a friend, it appears to me it is not possible to find any other better remedy than for us to seek to benefit from his memory, and recover from it any matter that was either keenly observed or wisely discussed.

And as there is nothing of his more recent than the discussions which the Lord Fabrizio Colonna had with him in his gardens, where matters pertaining to war were discussed at length by that Lord, with (questions) keenly and prudently asked by Cosimo, it seemed proper to me having been present

with other friends of ours, to recall him to memory, so that reading it, the friends of Cosimo who met there will renew in their minds the memory of his virtue, and another part grieving for not having been there, will learn in part of many things discussed wisely by a most sagacious man useful not only to the military way of life, but to the civilian as well. I will relate, therefore, how Fabrizio Colonna, when he returned from Lombardy where he had fought a long time gloriously for the Catholic King, decided to pass through Florence to rest several days in that City in order to visit His Excellency the Duke, and see again several gentlemen with whom he had been familiar in the past.

Whence it appeared proper to Cosimo to invite him to a banquet in his gardens, not so much to show his generosity as to have reason to talk to him at length, and to learn and understand several things from him, according as one can hope to from such a man, for it appeared to him to give him an opportunity to spend a day discussing such matters as would satisfy his mind. Fabrizio, therefore, came as planned, and was received by Cosimo together with several other loyal friends of his, among whom were Zanobi Buondelmonti, Battista Della Palla, and Luigi Alamanni, young men most ardent in the same studies and loved by him, whose good qualities, because they were also praised daily by himself, we will omit. Fabrizio, therefore, was honored according to the times and the place, with all the highest honors they could give him.

As soon as the convivial pleasures were past and the table cleared and every arrangement of feasting finished, which, in the presence of great men and those who have their minds turned to honorable thoughts is soon accomplished, and because the day was long and the heat intense, Cosimo,

in order to satisfy their desire better, judged it would be well to take the opportunity to escape the heat by leading them to the more secret and shadowy part of his garden: when they arrived there and chairs brought out, some sat on the grass which was most fresh in the place, some sat on chairs placed in those parts under the shadow of very high trees; Fabrizio praised the place as most delightful, and looking especially at the trees, he did not recognize one of them, and looked puzzled. Cosimo, becoming aware of this said: Perhaps you have no knowledge of some of these trees, but do not wonder about them, because here are some which were more widely known by the ancients than are those commonly seen today. And giving him the name of some and telling him that Bernardo, his grandfather, had worked hard in their culture, Fabrizio replied: I was thinking that it was what you said I was, and this place and this study make me remember several Princes of the Kingdom, who delighted in their ancient culture and the shadow they cast.

And stopping speaking of this, and somewhat upon himself as though in suspense, he added: If I did not think I would offend you, I would give you my opinion: but I do not believe in talking and discussing things with friends in this manner that I insult them. How much better would they have done (it is said with peace to everyone) to seek to imitate the ancients in the strong and rugged things, not in the soft and delicate, and in the things they did under the sun, not in the shadows, to adopt the honest and perfect ways of antiquity, not the false and corrupt; for while these practices were pleasing



to my Romans, my country (without them) was ruined. To which Cosimo replied (but to avoid the necessity of having to repeat so many times who is speaking, and what the other adds, only the names of those speaking will be noted, without repeating the others).

Cosimo, therefore, said: You have opened the way for a discussion which I desired, and I pray you to speak without regard, for I will question you without regard; and if, in questioning or in replying, I accuse or excuse anyone, it will not be for accusing or excusing, but to understand the truth from you. FABRIZIO: And I will be much content to tell you what I know of all that you ask me; whether it be true or not, I will leave to your judgement. And I will be grateful if you ask me, for I am about to learn as much from what you ask me, as you will from me replying to you, because many times a wise questioner causes one to consider many things and understand many others which, without having been asked, would never have been understood.

COSIMO: I want to return to what you first were saying, that my grandfather and those of yours had more wisely imitated the ancients in rugged things than in delicate ones, and I want to excuse my side because I will let you excuse the other (your side). I do not believe that in your time there was a man who disliked living as softly as he, and that he was so much a lover of that rugged life which you praise: none the less he recognized he could not practice it in his personal life, nor in that of his sons, having been born in so corrupted an age, where anyone who wanted to depart from the common usage would be deformed and despised by everyone. For if anyone in a naked state should thrash upon the sand under the highest sun, or upon

the snow in the most icy months of winter, as did Diogenes, he would be considered mad.

If anyone (like the Spartan) should raise his children on a farm, make them sleep in the open, go with head and feet bare, bathe in cold water in order to harden them to endure vicissitudes, so that they then might love life less and fear death less, he would be praised by few and followed by none. So that dismayed at these ways of living, he presently leaves the ways of the ancients, and in imitating antiquity, does only that which he can with little wonderment. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/EBook.php?recordID=0523>

Page 5 of 106 Machiavelli\_0523 09/15/2005 09:27 AM ancients, and in imitating antiquity, does only that which he can with little wonderment.

FABRIZIO: You have excused him strongly in this part, and certainly you speak the truth: but I did not speak so much of these rugged ways of living, as of those other more human ways which have a greater conformity to the ways of living today, which I do not believe should have been difficult to introduce by one who is numbered among the Princes of a City. I will never forego my examples of my Romans. If their way of living should be examined, and the institutions in their Republic, there will be observed in her many things not impossible to introduce in a Society where there yet might be something of good. COSIMO: What are those things similar to the ancients that you would introduce? FABRIZIO: To honor and reward virtue, not to have contempt for poverty, to esteem the modes and orders of military discipline, to constrain citizens to love one another, to live without factions, to esteem less the private than the public good, and other such things which could easily be added in these times.

It is not difficult to persuade (people) to these ways, when one considers these at length and approaches them in the usual manner, for the truth will appear in such (examinations) that every common talent is capable of undertaking them. Anyone can arrange these things; (for example), one plants trees under the shadow of which he lives more happily and merrily than if he had not (planted them). COSIMO: I do not want to reply to anything of what you have spoken, but I do want leave to give a judgment on these, which can be easily judged, and I shall address myself to you who accuse those who in serious and important actions are not imitators of the ancients, thinking that in this way I can more easily carry out my intentions.

I should want, therefore, to know from you whence it arises that, on the one hand you condemn those who do not imitate the ancients in their actions, on the other hand, in matters of war which is your profession and in which you are judged to be excellent, it is not observed that you have employed any of the ancient methods, or those which have some similarity. FABRIZIO: You have come to the point where I expected you to, for what I said did not merit any other question, nor did I wish for any other. And although I am able to save myself with a simple excuse, none the less I want, for your greater satisfaction and mine, since the season (weather) allows it, to enter into a much longer discussion. Men who want to do something, ought first to prepare themselves with all industry, in order [when the opportunity is seen] to be prepared to achieve that which they have proposed. And whenever the preparations are undertaken cautiously, unknown to anyone, no one can be accused of negligence unless he is first discovered by the occasion; in which if it is not then successful, it is seen that either he has not sufficiently prepared

himself, or that he has not in some part given thought to it. And as the opportunity has not come to me to be able to show the preparations I would make to bring the military to your ancient organization, and it I have not done so, I cannot be blamed either by you or by others. I believe this excuse is enough to respond to your accusation. COSIMO: It would be enough if I was certain that the opportunity did not present itself. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/EBook.php?recordID=0523> Page 6 of 106 Machiavelli\_0523 09/15/2005 09: 27 AM

FABRIZIO: But because I know you could doubt whether this opportunity had come about or not, I want to discuss at length [if you will listen to me with patience] which preparations are necessary to be made first, what occasion needs to arise, what difficulty impedes the preparations from becoming beneficial and the occasion from arriving, and that this is [which appears a paradox] most difficult and most easy to do. COSIMO: You cannot do anything more pleasing for me and for the others than this. But if it is not painful for you to speak, it will never be painful for us to listen. But at this discussion may be long, I want help from these, my friends, and with your permission, and they and I pray you one thing, that you do not become annoyed if we sometimes interrupt you with some opportune question.

FABRIZIO: I am most content that you, Cosimo, with these other young people here, should question me, for I believe that young men will become more familiar with military matters, and will more easily understand what I have to say. The others, whose hair (head) is white and whose blood is icy, in part are enemies of war and in part incorrigible, as those who believe that the times and not the evil ways constrain men to live in such a fashion. So

ask anything of me, with assurance and without regard; I desire this, as much because it will afford me a little rest, as because it will give me pleasure not to leave any doubts in your minds. I want to begin from your words, where you said to me that in war [which is my profession] I have not employed any of the ancient methods.

Upon this I say, that this being a profession by which men of every time were not able to live honestly, it cannot be employed as a profession except by a Republic or a Kingdom; and both of these, if well established, will never allow any of their citizens or subjects to employ it as a profession: for he who practices it will never be judged to be good, as to gain some usefulness from it at any time he must be rapacious, deceitful, violent, and have many qualities, which of necessity, do not make him good: nor can men who employ this as a profession, the great as well as the least, be made otherwise, for this profession does not provide for them in peace.

Whence they are obliged, either to hope that there will be no peace or to gain so much for themselves in times of war, that they can provide for themselves in times of peace. And wherever one of these two thoughts exists, it does not occur in a good man; for, from the desire to provide for oneself in every circumstance, robberies, violence and assassinations result, which such soldiers do to friends as well as to enemies: and from not desiring peace, there arises those deceptions which Captains perpetrate upon those whom they lead, because war hardens them: and even if peace occurs frequently, it happens that the leaders, being deprived of their stipends and of their licentious mode of living, raise a flag of piracy, and without any mercy sack a province.

Do you not have within the memory of events of your time, many soldiers in Italy, finding themselves without employment because of the termination of wars, gathered themselves into very troublesome gangs, calling themselves companies, and went about levying tribute on the towns and sacking the country, without there being any remedy able to be applied? Have you not read how the Carthaginian soldiers, when the first war they engaged in with the Romans under Matus and Spendius was ended, tumultuously chose two leaders, and waged a more dangerous war against the Carthaginians than that which they had just concluded with the <http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/EBook.php?recordID=0523> Page 7 of 106 Machiavelli\_0523 09/15/2005 09: 27 AM Romans?

And in the time of our fathers, Francesco Sforza, in order to be able to live honorably (comfortably) in times of peace, not only deceived the Milanese, in whose pay he was, but took away their liberty and became their Prince. All the other soldiers of Italy, who have employed the military as their particular profession, have been like this man; and if, through their malignity, they have not become Dukes of Milan, so much more do they merit to be censured; for without such a return [if their lives were to be examined], they all have the same cares. Sforza, father of Francesco, constrained Queen Giovanna to throw herself into the arms of the King of Aragon, having abandoned her suddenly, and left her disarmed amid her enemies, only in order to satisfy his ambition of either levying tribute or taking the Kingdom.

Braccio, with the same industry, sought to occupy the Kingdom of Naples, and would have succeeded, had he not been routed and killed at Aquilla. Such evils do not result from anything else other than the existence of men

who employ the practice of soldiering as their own profession. Do you not have a proverb which strengthens my argument, which says: War makes robbers, and peace hangs them? For those who do not know how to live by another practice, and not finding any one who will support them in that, and not having so much virtu that they know how to come and live together honorably, are forced by necessity to roam the streets, and justice is forced to extinguish them.

COSIMO: You have made me turn this profession (art) of soldiering back almost to nothing, and I had supposed it to be the most excellent and most honorable of any: so that if you do not clarify this better, I will not be satisfied; for if it is as you say, I do not know whence arises the glory of Caesar, Pompey, Scipio, Marcellus, and of so many Roman Captains who are celebrated for their fame as the Gods. FABRIZIO: I have not yet finished discussing all that I proposed, which included two things: the one, that a good man was not able to undertake this practice because of his profession: the other, that a well established Republic or Kingdom would never permit its subjects or citizens to employ it for their profession. Concerning the first, I have spoken as much as has occurred to me: it remains for me to talk of the second, where I shall reply to this last question of yours, and I say that Pompey and Caesar, and almost all those Captains who were in Rome after the last Carthaginian war, acquired fame as valiant men, not as good men: but those who had lived before them acquired glory as valiant and good men: which results from the fact that these latter did not take up the practice of war as their profession; and those whom I named first as those who employed it as their profession. And while the Republic lived

immaculately, no great citizen ever presumed by means of such a practice to enrich himself during (periods of) peace by breaking laws, despoiling the provinces, usurping and tyrannizing the country, and imposing himself in every way; nor did anyone of the lowest fortune think of violating the sacred agreement, adhere himself to any private individual, not fearing the Senate, or to perform any disgraceful act of tyranny in order to live at all times by the profession of war.

But those who were Captains, being content with the triumph, returned with a desire for the private life; and those who were members (of the army) returned with a desire to lay down the arms they had taken up; and everyone returned to the art (trade or profession) by which they ordinarily lived; nor was there ever anyone who hoped to provide for himself by plunder and by means of these arts. A clear and evident example of this as it applies to great citizens can be found in the <http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/EBook.php?recordID=0523> Page 8 of 106 Machiavelli\_0523 09/15/2005 09: 27 AM arts. A clear and evident example of this as it applies to great citizens can be found in the Regent Attilio, who, when he was captain of the Roman armies in Africa, and having almost defeated the Carthaginians, asked the Senate for permission to return to his house to look after his farms which were being spoiled by his laborers.

Whence it is clearer than the sun, that if that man had practiced war as his profession, and by means of it thought to obtain some advantage for himself, having so many provinces which (he could) plunder, he would not have asked permission to return to take care of his fields, as each day he could have obtained more than the value of all his possessions. But as these good



men, who do not practice war as their profession, do not expect to gain anything from it except hard work, danger, and glory, as soon as they are sufficiently glorious, desire to return to their homes and live from the practice of their own profession. As to men of lower status and gregarious soldiers, it is also true that every one voluntarily withdrew from such a practice, for when he was not fighting would have desired to fight, but when he was fighting wanted to be dismissed.

Which illustrates the many ways, and especially in seeing that it was among the first privileges, that the Roman people gave to one of its Citizens, that he should not be constrained unwillingly to fight. Rome, therefore, while she was well organized [which it was up to the time of the Gracchi] did not have one soldier who had to take up this practice as a profession, and therefore had few bad ones, and these were severely punished. A well ordered City, therefore, ought to desire that this training for war ought to be employed in times of peace as an exercise, and in times of war as a necessity and for glory, and allow the public only to use it as a profession, as Rome did.

And any citizen who has other aims in (using) such exercises is not good, and any City which governs itself otherwise, is not well ordered. COSIMO: I am very much content and satisfied with what you have said up to now, and this conclusion which you have made pleases me greatly: and I believe it will be true when expected from a Republic, but as to Kings, I do not yet know why I should believe that a King would not want particularly to have around him those who take up such a practice as their profession. FABRIZIO: A well ordered Kingdom ought so much the more avoid such artifices, for these only are the things which corrupt the King and all the Ministers in a Tyranny.

And do not, on the other side, tell me of some present Kingdom, for I will not admit them to be all well ordered Kingdoms; for Kingdoms that are well ordered do not give absolute (power to) Rule to their Kings, except in the armies, for only there is a quick decision necessary, and, therefore, he who (rules) there must have this unique power: in other matters, he cannot do anything without counsel, and those who counsel him have to fear those whom he may have near him who, in times of peace, desire war because they are unable to live without it. But I want to dwell a little longer on this subject, and look for a Kingdom totally good, but similar to those that exist today, where those who take up the profession of war for themselves still ought to be feared by the King, for the sinews of armies without any doubt are the infantry.

So that if a King does not organize himself in such a way that his infantry in time of peace are content to return to their homes and live from the practice of their own professions, it must happen of necessity that he will be ruined; for there is not to be found a more dangerous infantry than that which is composed of those who make the waging of war their profession; for you are <http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/EBook.php?recordID=0523> Page 9 of 106 Machiavelli\_0523 09/15/2005 09:27 AM that which is composed of those who make the waging of war their profession; for you are forced to make war always, or pay them always, or to risk the danger that they take away the Kingdom from you. To make war always is not possible: (and) one cannot pay always; and, hence, that danger is run of losing the State.

My Romans [as I have said], as long as they were wise and good, never permitted that their citizens should take up this practice as their profession,

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notwithstanding that they were able to raise them at all times, for they made war at all times: but in order to avoid the harm which this continuous practice of theirs could do to them, since the times did not change, they changed the men, and kept turning men over in their legions so that every fifteen years they always completely re-manned them: and thus they desired men in the flower of their age, which is from eighteen to thirty five years, during which time their legs, their hands, and their eyes, worked together, nor did they expect that their strength should decrease in them, or that malice should grow in them, as they did in corrupt times. Ottavianus first, and then Tiberius, thinking more of their own power than the public usefulness, in order to rule over the Roman people more easily, begun to disarm them and to keep the same armies continually at the frontiers of the Empire.

And because they did not think it sufficient to hold the Roman People and the Senate in check, they instituted an army called the Praetorian (Guard), which was kept near the walls of Rome in a fort adjacent to that City. And as they now begun freely to permit men assigned to the army to practice military matters as their profession, there soon resulted that these men became insolent, and they became formidable to the Senate and damaging to the Emperor. Whence there resulted that many men were killed because of their insolence, for they gave the Empire and took it away from anyone they wished, and it often occurred that at one time there were many Emperors created by the several armies. From which state of affairs proceeded first the division of the Empire and finally its ruin.

Kings ought, therefore, if they want to live securely, have their infantry composed of men, who, when it is necessary for him to wage war, will willingly go forth to it for love of him, and afterwards when peace comes, more willingly return to their homes; which will always happen if he selects men who know how to live by a profession other than this. And thus he ought to desire, with the coming of peace, that his Princes return to governing their people, gentlemen to the cultivation of their possessions, and the infantry to their particular arts (trades or professions); and everyone of these will willingly make war in order to have peace, and will not seek to disturb the peace to have war. COSIMO: Truly, this reasoning of yours appears to me well considered: none the less, as it is almost contrary to what I have thought up to now, my mind is not yet purged of every doubt.

For I see many Lords and Gentlemen who provide for themselves in times of peace through the training for war, as do your equals who obtain provisions from Princes and the Community. I also see almost all the men at arms remaining in the garrisons of the city and of the fortresses. So that it appears to me that there is a long time of peace for everyone. FABRIZIO: I do not believe that you believe this, that everyone has a place in time of peace; for other reasons can be cited for their being stationed there, and the small number of people who remain in the places mentioned by you will answer your question. What is the proportion of infantry needed to be employed in time of war to that in peace? or while the fortresses and the city are garrisoned in times of peace, they are much more garrisoned in times of war; to this should be

added the soldiers kept in the field who are a great number, but all of whom are released in time of peace. And concerning the garrisons of States, who are a small number, Pope Julius and you have shown how much they are to be feared who do not know any other profession than war, as you have taken them out of your garrisons because of their insolence, and placed the Swiss there, who are born and raised under the laws and are chosen by the community in an honest election; so do not say further that in peace there is a place for every man.

As to the men at arms continued in their enlistment in peace time, the answer appears more difficult. None the less, whoever considers everything well, will easily find the answer, for this thing of keeping on the men at arms is a corrupt thing and not good. The reason is this; as there are men who do not have any art (trade or profession), a thousand evils will arise every day in those States where they exist, and especially so if they were to be joined by a great number of companions: but as they are few, and unable by themselves to constitute an army, they therefore, cannot do any serious damage. None the less, they have done so many times, as I said of Francesco and of Sforza, his father, and of Braccio of Perugia.

So I do not approve of this custom of keeping men at arms, both because it is corrupt and because it can cause great evils. COSIMO: Would you do without them? , or if you keep them, how would you do so? FABRIZIO: By means of an ordinance, not like those of the King of France, because they are as dangerous and insolent as ours, but like those of the ancients, who created horsemen (cavalry) from their subjects, and in times of peace sent them back to their homes to live from the practice of their own profession, as

I shall discuss at length before I finish this discussion. So, if this part of the army can now live by such a practice even when there is peace, it stems from a corrupt order.

As to the provisions that are reserved for me and the other leaders, I say to you that this likewise is a most corrupt order, for a wise Republic ought not to give them to anyone, rather it ought to employ its citizens as leaders in war, and in time of peace desire that they return to their professions. Thus also, a wise King ought not to give (provisions) to them, or if he does give them, the reasons ought to be either as a reward for some excellent act, or in order to avail himself of such a man in peace as well as in war. And because you have mentioned me, I want the example to include me, and I say I have never practiced war as a profession, for my profession is to govern my subjects, and defend them, and in order to defend them, I must love peace but know how to make war; and my King does not reward and esteem me so much for what I know of war, as because I know also how to counsel him in peace.

Any King ought not, therefore, to want to have next to him anyone who is not thusly constituted, if he is wise and wants to govern prudently; for if he has around him either too many lovers of peace or too many lovers of war, they will cause him to err. I cannot, in this first discussion of mine and according to my suggestion, say otherwise, and if this is not enough for you, you must seek one which satisfies you better. You can begin to recognize how much difficulty there is in bringing the ancient methods into modern wars, and what preparations a wise man must make, and what opportunities he can hope for to put them into execution. But little by little you will know these

things better if the discussion on bringing any <http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/EBook.php?recordID=0523> Page 11 of 106 Machiavelli\_0523 09/15/2005 09:27 AM execution.

But little by little you will know these things better if the discussion on bringing any part of the ancient institutions to the present order of things does not weary you. COSIMO: If we first desired to hear your discussion of these matters, truly what you have said up to now redoubles that desire. We thank you, therefore, for what we have had and ask you for the rest. FABRIZIO: Since this is your pleasure, I want to begin to treat of this matter from the beginning being able in that way to demonstrate it more fully, so that it may be better understood. The aim of those who want to make war is to be able to combat in the field with every (kind) of enemy, and to be able to win the engagement. To want to do this, they must raise an army.

In raising an army, it is necessary to find men, arm them, organize them, train them in small and large (battle) orders, lodge them, and expose them to the enemy afterwards, either at a standstill or while marching. All the industry of war in the field is placed in these things, which are the more necessary and honored (in the waging of war). And if one does well in offering battle to the enemy, all the other errors he may make in the conduct of the war are supportable: but if he lacks this organization, even though he be valiant in other particulars, he will never carry on a war to victory (and honor). For, as one engagement that you win cancels out every other bad action of yours, so likewise, when you lose one, all the things you have done well before become useless.

Since it is necessary, therefore, first to find men, you must come to the Deletto (Draft) of them, as thus the ancients called it, and which we call Scelta (Selection): but in order to call it by a more honored name, I want us to preserve the name of Deletto. Those who have drawn up regulations for war want men to be chosen from temperate countries as they have spirit and are prudent; for warm countries give rise to men who are prudent but not spirited, and cold (countries) to men who are spirited but not prudent. This regulation is drawn up well for one who is the Prince of all the world, and is therefore permitted to draw men from those places that appear best to him: but wanting to draw up a regulation that anyone can use, one must say that every Republic and every Kingdom ought to take soldiers from their own country, whether it is hot, cold, or temperate.

For, from ancient examples, it is seen that in every country, good soldiers are made by training; because where nature is lacking, industry supplies it, which, in this case, is worth more than nature: And selecting them from another place cannot be called Deletto, because Deletto means to say to take the best of a province, and to have the power to select as well those who do not want to fight as those who do want to. This Deletto therefore, cannot be made unless the places are subject to you; for you cannot take whoever you want in the countries that are not yours, but you need to take those who want to come. COSIMO: And of those who want to come, it can even be said, that they turn and leave you, and because of this, it can then be called a Deletto. FABRIZIO: In a certain way, you say what is true: but consider the defects that such as Deletto has in itself, for often it happens that it is not a Deletto.



The first thing (to consider), is that those who are not your subjects and do not willingly want to fight, are not of the best, rather they are of the worst of a province; for if nay are troublesome, idle, without restraint, without religion, subject to the rule of the father, blasphemous, gamblers, and in every way <http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/EBook.php?recordID=0523> Page 12 of 106 Machiavelli\_0523 09/15/2005 09:27 AM without religion, subject to the rule of the father, blasphemous, gamblers, and in every way badly brought up, they are those who want to fight, (and) these habits cannot be more contrary to a true and good military life.

When there are so many of such men offered to you that they exceed the number you had designated, you can select them; but if the material is bad, it is impossible for the Deletto to be good: but many times it happens that they are not so many as (are needed) to fill the number you require: so that being forced to take them all, it results that it can no longer be called the making of a Deletto, but in enlisting of infantry. The armies of Italy and other places are raised today with these evils, except in Germany, where no one is enlisted by command of the Prince, but according to the wishes of those who want to fight. Think, therefore, what methods of those ancients can now be introduced in an army of men put together by similar means. COSIMO: What means should be taken therefore? FABRIZIO: What I have just said: select them from your own subjects, and with the authority of the Prince. COSIMO: Would you introduce any ancient form in those thus selected?

FABRIZIO: You know well it would be so; if it is a Principality, he who should command should be their Prince or an ordinary Lord; or if it is a Republic, a citizen who for the time should be Captain: otherwise it is difficult to do the

thing well. COSIMO: Why? FABRIZIO: I will tell you in time: for now, I want this to suffice for you, that it cannot be done well in any other way. COSIMO: If you have, therefore, to make ibis Deletto in your country, whence do you judge it better to draw them, from the City or the Countryside? FABRIZIO: Those who have written of this all agree that it is better to select them from the Countryside, as they are men accustomed to discomfort, brought up on hard work, accustomed to be in the sun and avoid the shade, know how to handle the sword, dig a ditch, carry a load, and are without cunning or malice.

But on this subject, my opinion would be, that as soldiers are of two kinds, afoot and on horseback, that those afoot be selected from the Countryside, and those on horseback from the City. COSIMO: Of what age would you draw them? FABRIZIO: If I had to raise an (entirely) new army, I would draw them from seventeen to forty years of age; if the army already exists and I had to replenish it, at seventeen years of age always. COSIMO: I do not understand this distinction well. FABRIZIO: I will tell you: if I should have to organize an army where there is none, it would be necessary to select all those men who were more capable, as long as they were of military <http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/EBook.php?recordID=0523> Page 13 of 106 Machiavelli\_0523 09/15/2005 09: 27 AM e necessary to select all those men who were more capable, as long as they were of military age, in order to instruct them as I would tell them: but if I should have to make the Deletto in places where the army was (already) organized, in order to supplement it, I would take those of seventeen years of age, because the others having been taken for some time would have been selected and instructed. COSIMO: Therefore you would

want to make an ordinance similar to that which exists in our countries.

FABRIZIO: You say well: it is true that I would arm them, captain them, train them, and organize them, in a way which I do not know whether or not you have organized them similarly. COSIMO: Therefore you praise the ordinance?

FABRIZIO: Why would you want me to condemn it? COSIMO: Because many wise men have censured it.

FABRIZIO: You say something contrary, when you say a wise man censured the ordinance: for he can be held a wise man and to have censured them wrongly. COSIMO: The wrong conclusion that he has made will always cause

us to have such a opinion. FABRIZIO: Watch out that the defect is not yours, but his: as that which you recognized before this discussion furnishes proof.

COSIMO: You do a most gracious thing. But I want to tell you that you should be able to justify yourself better in that of which those men are accused.

These men say thusly: either that it is useless and our trusting in it will cause us to lose the State: or it is of virtue, and he who governs through it can easily deprive her of it.

They cite the Romans, who by their own arms lost their liberty: They cite the Venetians and the King of France, of whom they say that the former, in order not to obey one of its Citizens employed the arms of others, and the King disarmed his People so as to be able to command them more easily. But they fear the uselessness of this much more; for which uselessness they cite two principal reasons: the one, because they are inexpert; the other, for having to fight by force: because they say that they never learn anything from great men, and nothing good is ever done by force. FABRIZIO: All the reasons that you mention are from men who are not far sighted, as I shall clearly show.

And first, as to the uselessness, I say to you that no army is of more use than your own, nor can an army of your own be organized except in this way.

And as there is no debating over this, which all the examples of ancient history does for us, I do not want to lose time over it. And because they cite inexperience and force, I say [as it is true] that inept experience gives rise to little spirit (enthusiasm) and force makes for discontent: but experience and enthusiasm gains for themselves the means for arming, training, and organizing them, as you will see in the first part of this discussion. But as to force, you must understand that as men are brought to the army by commandment of the Prince, they have to come, whether it is

http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/EBook.php?recordID=0523 Page 14 of 106  
Machiavelli\_0523 09/15/2005 09:27 AM en are brought to the army by commandment of the Prince, they have to come, whether it is entirely by force or entirely voluntarily: for if it were entirely from desire, there would not be a Deletto as only a few of them would go; so also, the (going) entirely by force would produce bad results; therefore, a middle way ought to be taken where neither the entirely forced or entirely voluntarily (means are used), but they should come, drawn by the regard they have for the Prince, where they are more afraid of his anger than the immediate punishment: and it will always happen that there will be a compulsion mixed with willingness, from which that discontent cannot arise which causes bad effects. Yet I do not claim that an army thus constituted cannot be defeated; for many times the Roman armies were overcome, and the army of Hannibal was defeated: so that it can be seen that no army can be so organized that a promise can be given that it cannot be routed. These wise men of yours,

therefore, ought not measure this uselessness from having lost one time, but to believe that just as they can lose, so too they can win and remedy the cause of the defeat.

And if they should look into this, they will find that it would not have happened because of a defect in the means, but of the organization which was not sufficiently perfect. And, as I have said, they ought to provide for you, not by censuring the organization, but by correcting it: as to how this ought to be done, you will come to know little by little. As to being apprehensive that such organization will not deprive you of the State by one who makes himself a leader, I reply, that the arms carried by his citizens or subjects, given to them by laws and ordinances, never do him harm, but rather are always of some usefulness, and preserve the City uncorrupted for a longer time by means of these (arms), than without (them).

Rome remained free four hundred years while armed: Sparta eight hundred: Many other Cities have been dis-armed, and have been free less than forty years; for Cities have need of arms, and if they do not have arms of their own, they hire them from foreigners, and the arms of foreigners more readily do harm to the public good than their own; for they are easier to corrupt, and a citizen who becomes powerful can more readily avail himself, and can also manage the people more readily as he has to oppress men who are disarmed. In addition to this, a City ought to fear two enemies more than one. One which avails itself of foreigners immediately has to fear not only its citizens, but the foreigners that it enlists; and, remembering what I told you a short while ago of Francesco Sforza, (you will see that) that fear ought to

exist. One which employs its own arms, has not other fear except of its own Citizens.

But of all the reasons which can be given, I want this one to serve me, that no one ever established any Republic or Kingdom who did not think that it should be defended by those who lived there with arms: and if the Venetians had been as wise in this as in their other institutions, they would have created a new world Kingdom; but who so much more merit censure, because they had been the first who were armed by their founders. And not having dominion on land, they armed themselves on the sea, where they waged war with virtu, and with arms in hand enlarged their country. But when the time came when they had to wage war on land to defend Venice and where they ought to have sent their own citizens to fight (on land), they enlisted as their captain (a foreigner), the Marquis of Mantua. This was the sinister course which prevented them from rising to the skies and expanding.

And they did this in the belief that, as they knew how to wage war at sea, they should not trust themselves in waging it on land; which was an unwise belief (distrust), because a Sea captain, who is accustomed to <http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/EBook.php?recordID=0523> Page 15 of 106 Machiavelli\_0523 09/15/2005 09:27 AM on land; which was an unwise belief (distrust), because a Sea captain, who is accustomed to combat with winds, water, and men, could more easily become a Captain on land where the combat is with men only, than a land Captain become a sea one. And my Romans, knowing how to combat on land and not on the sea, when the war broke out with the Carthaginians who were powerful on the sea, did not

enlist Greeks or Spaniards experienced at sea, but imposed that change on those citizens they sent (to fight) on land, and they won.

If they did this in order that one of their citizens should not become Tyrant, it was a fear that was given little consideration; for, in addition to the other reasons mentioned a short while ago concerning such a proposal, if a citizen (skilled) in (the use of) arms at sea had never been made a Tyrant in a City situated in the sea, so much less would he be able to do this if he were (skilled) in (the use of arms) on land. And, because of this, they ought to have seen that arms in the hands of their own citizens could not create Tyrants, but the evil institutions of a Government are those which cause a City to be tyrannized; and, as they had a good Government, did not have to fear arms of their own citizens. They took an imprudent course, therefore, which was the cause of their being deprived of much glory and happiness. As to the error which the King of France makes in not having his people disciplined to war, from what has been cited from examples previously mentioned, there is no one [devoid of some particular passion of theirs] who does not judge this defect to be in the Republic, and that this negligence alone is what makes it weak. But I have made too great a digression and have gotten away from my subject: yet I have done this to answer you and to show you, that no reliance can be had on arms other than ones own, and ones own arms cannot be established otherwise than by way of an ordinance, nor can forms of armies be introduced in any place, nor military discipline instituted. If you have read the arrangements which the first Kings made in Rome, and most especially of Servius Tullus, you will find that the

institution of classes is none other than an arrangement to be able quickly to put together an army for the defense of that City.

But turning to our Deletto, I say again, that having to replenish an established (old) organization, I would take the seventeen year olds, but having to create a new one, I would take them of every age between seventeen and forty in order to avail myself of them quickly. COSIMO: Would you make a difference of what profession (art) you would choose them from?

FABRIZIO: These writers do so, for they do not want that bird hunters, fishermen, cooks, procurers, and anyone who makes amusement his calling should be taken, but they want that, in addition to tillers of the soil, smiths and blacksmiths, carpenters, butchers, hunters, and such like, should be taken.

But I would make little difference in conjecturing from his calling how good the man may be, but how much I can use him with the greatest usefulness. And for this reason, the peasants, who are accustomed to working the land, are more useful than anyone else, for of all the professions (arts), this one is used more than any other in the army: After this, are the forgers (smiths), carpenters, blacksmiths, shoemakers; of whom it is useful to have many, for their skills succeed in many things, as they are a very good thing for a soldier to have, from whom you draw double service. COSIMO: How are those who are or are not suitable to fight chosen? <http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/EBook.php?recordID=0523> Page 16 of 106

Machiavelli\_0523 09/15/2005 09: 27 AM FABRIZIO: I want to talk of the manner of selecting a new organization in order to make it afterwards into an army; which yet also apply in the discussion of the selection that should <https://assignbuster.com/machiavelli-the-art-of-war/>



be made in re-manning an old (established) organization. I say, therefore, that how good the man is that you have to select as a soldier is recognized either from his experience, shown by some excellent deeds of his, or by conjecture. The proof of virtu cannot be found in men who are newly selected, and who never before have been selected; and of the former, few or none are found in an organization which is newly established.

It is necessary, therefore, lacking experience to have recourse to conjecture, which is derived from their age, profession, and physical appearance. The first two have been discussed: it remains to talk of the third. And yet I say that some have wanted that the soldier be big, among whom was Pyrrhus: Some others have chosen them only from the strength of the body, as Caesar did: which strength of body is conjectured from the composition of the members and the gracefulness of aspect. And yet some of those who write say that he should have lively and merry eyes, a nery neck, a large breast, muscular arms, long fingers, a small stomach, round hips, sleek legs and feet: which parts usually render a man strong and agile, which are the two things sought above everything else in a soldier.

He ought, above all, to have regard for his habits and that there should be in him a (sense of) honesty and shame, otherwise there will be selected only an instrument of trouble and a beginning of corruption; for there is no one who believes that in a dishonest education and in a brutish mind, there can exist some virtu which in some part may be praiseworthy. Nor does it appear to me superfluous, rather I believe it necessary, in order for you to understand better the importance of this selection, to tell you the method that the Roman Consuls at the start of their Magistracy observed in selecting the

Roman legions. In which Deletto, because those who had to be selected were to be a mixture of new and veteran men [because of the continuing wars], they proceeded from experience with regard to the old (veteran) men, and from conjecture with regard to the new. And this ought to be noted, that these Deletti are made, either for immediate training and use, or for future employment.

I have talked, and will talk, of those that are made for future employment, because my intention is to show you how an army can be organized in countries where there is no military (organization), in which countries I cannot have Deletti in order to make use of them. But in countries where it is the custom to call out armies, and by means of the Prince, these (Deletti) exist, as was observed at Rome and is today observed among the Swiss. For in these Deletti, if they are for the (selection of) new men, there are so many others accustomed to being under military orders, that the old (veteran) and new, being mixed together, make a good and united body.

Notwithstanding this, the Emperors, when they began to hold fixed the (term of service of the) soldiers, placed new men in charge over the soldiers, whom they called Tironi, as teachers to train them, as is seen in the life of the Emperor Maximus: which thing, while Rome was free, was instituted, not in the army, but within the City: and as the military exercises where the young men were trained were in the City, there resulted that those then chosen to go to war, being accustomed in the method of mock warfare, could easily adapt themselves to real war. But afterwards, when these Emperors discontinued these exercises, it was necessary to employ the methods I have described to you.

Arriving, therefore, at the methods of the Roman Selection, I say that, as soon as the Roman Consuls, on whom was imposed the carrying on of the war, had assumed the Magistracy, in wanting to organize their armies [as it <http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/EBook.php?recordID=0523> Page 17 of 106 Machiavelli\_0523 09/15/2005 09:27 AM carrying on of the war, had assumed the Magistracy, in wanting to organize their armies [as it was the custom that each of them had two legions of Roman men, who were the nerve (center) of their armies], created twenty four military Tribunes, proposing six for each legion, who filled that office which today is done by those whom we call Constables. After they had assembled all the Roman men adept at carrying arms, and placed the Tribunes of each legion apart from each of the others. Afterwards, by lot they drew the Tribes, from which the first Selection was to be made, and of that Tribe they selected four of their best men, from whom one was selected by the Tribunes of the first legion, and of the other three, one was selected by the Tribunes of the second legion; of the other two, one was selected by the Tribunes of the third, and that last belonged to the fourth legion. After these four, four others were selected, of whom the first man was selected by the Tribunes of the second legion, the second by those of the third, the third by those of the fourth, the fourth remained to the first.

After, another four were chosen: the first man was selected by the (Tribunes of the) third (legion), the second by the fourth, the third by the first, the fourth remained to the second. And thus this method of selection changed successively, so that the selection came to be equal, and the legions equalized. And as we said above, this was done where the men were to be

used immediately: and as it was formed of men of whom a good part were experienced in real warfare, and everyone in mock battles, this Deletto was able to be based on conjecture and experience. But when a new army was to be organized and the selection made for future employment, this Deletto cannot be based except on conjecture, which is done by age and physical appearance.

COSIMO: I believe what you have said is entirely true: but before you pass on to other discussion, I want to ask about one thing which you have made me remember, when you said that the Deletto which should be made where these men are not accustomed to fighting should be done by conjecture: for I have heard our organization censured in many of its parts, and especially as to number; for many say that a lesser number ought to be taken, of whom those that are drawn would be better and the selection better, as there would not be as much hardship imposed on the men, and some reward given them, by means of which they would be more content and could be better commanded. Whence I would like to know your opinion on this part, and if you preferred a greater rather than a smaller number, and what methods you would use in selecting both numbers. FABRIZIO: Without doubt the greater number is more desirable and more necessary than the smaller: rather, to say better, where a great number are not available, a perfect organization cannot be made, and I will easily refute all the reasons cited in favor of this. I say, therefore, first, that where there are many people, as there are for example in

Tuscany, does not cause you to have better ones, or that the Deletto is more selective; for desiring in the selection of men to judge them on the basis of

experience, only a very few would probably be found in that country who would have had this experience, as much because few have been in a war, as because of those few who have been, very few have ever been put to the test, so that because of this they merit to be chosen before the others: so that whoever is in a similar situation should select them, must leave experience to one side and take them by conjecture: and if I were brought to such a necessity, I would want to see, if twenty young men of good physical appearance should come before me, with what rule I ought to take some or reject some: h