Game of Thrones

Machiavelli, Regime Transition, and Political Violence

Prepared for and presented at
“Institutions in Context: Democracy and Dictatorship”
June 4-10, 2012
University of Tampere
Tampere, Finland.
Talk Outline

• Why Machiavelli?
• Interpretive engagement (of *The Prince* and *Art of War*) with Olson’s Stationary Bandit.
• Two Implications (1 interpretive, 1 normative) for an institution of violence: the military.
I’m Little horse?

Will?!
Why Machiavelli?

• Is he a dictator or a democrat?
Dictator or Democrat?

- Let’s take a look at his most ‘dictatorial’ moments.
- ‘Weak Republican’
  - “According to the "weak republican" thesis, The Prince is an aberration. Despairing of the future of Florence, much less its republican government, Machiavelli saw the Medici as the only alternative to total chaos, and so wrote his advice book in reaction to an impending crisis” (Baron, 1961; Pocock, 1975).” (Dietz, 1986)
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• The virtue of anachronism:
Machiavelli’s Vs. Olson – An Interesting Juxtaposition

• Initial similarity in the accounts. Both feature:
  – Elites who use violence
  – An interaction between those elites and the people
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• Subsequent dissimilarity in the accounts. Machiavelli features a different conception of:
  – The needs of the players
    • Profit versus Autonomy (or non-interference)
  – The nature of the elite-people interaction.
    • Positive versus Zero-Sum
## Olson’s Stationary Bandit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Holder of Monopoly of Violence</th>
<th>Roving Bandit</th>
<th>Stationary Bandit</th>
<th>Democratic Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protection</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>From: invasion and each other</td>
<td>From: invasion, each other, and the state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Maximize</td>
<td>Maximize</td>
<td>Maximize (of the majority)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraction/Revenue</td>
<td>100% of all (extractable) resources</td>
<td>Till income falls</td>
<td>Sensitive to social costs, subject to size of ruling coalition</td>
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<td>Public Good Provision</td>
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Machiavelli’s Stationary Prince

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<td>Till income falls</td>
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- (1) Internal Security: Non-Enmity/Non-Contempt/Friendship with the people.
- Result: Development of social networks and other collective action mechanisms.
Security is a friendly gun, Momma.

“Still, a prince should make himself feared in such a way that if he does not gain love, he at any rate avoids hatred; for fear and the absence of hatred may well go together, and will be always attained by one who abstains from interfering with the [patrimony] of his citizens and subjects or with their women.” (The Prince, Ricci Trans)

“He who has the collectivity as enemy never secures himself; and the more cruelty he uses, the weaker his principality becomes. So the greatest remedy he has is to seek to make the people friendly to himself.” (The Prince, Mansfield Trans. P 45)
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- (1) Internal Security: Non-Emnity/Non-Contempt/Friendship with the people.
- (2) External Security: the citizen militia.
- Result: Development of social networks and other collective action mechanisms.
"[Mercenaries] are useless and dangerous; and if one keeps his state founded on mercenary arms, one will never be firm or secure; for they are disunited, ambitious, without discipline, unfaithful; bold among friends, among enemies cowardly; no fear of god, no faith with men; ruin is postponed only as long as attack is postponed; and in peace you are despoiled by them, in war by the enemy." (The Prince, Mansfield Trans. P 12)

"[it is] a certain truth that no man has ever founded a monarchy or a republic without being well-assured that if his subjects were armed, they would always be ready and willing to defend the monarchy or republic." (Art of War, Wood Trans. P 31)

"There has never been, then, a [founder] who has disarmed his subjects; on the contrary, whenever he has found them unarmed, he has always armed them." (The Prince, Mansfield Trans. P 83)
Implications

- **Interpretive**: Even in *The Prince* Machiavelli is, indeed, a partisan of democracies/republics.
  - He is a partisan in a manner compatible with the Wolinian interpretation (with caveats)

- **Normative**: The creation of a reliable mechanism of violence is justified both by a reduction in violence **AND** by democratic outcomes
  - In the right circumstances, democratic outcomes overwhelm Machiavelli’s ‘economy of violence.’
Thanks! And Go Devils!