

## *Constitutions in Crisis – Machiavelli, Harrington and Hume*

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### *Abstract*

This paper examines the relationship between constitutions and economic ‘crisis’ viewed through the lens of the civic republican tradition. Focus will be upon the theories of government given in the work of Niccolò Machiavelli, James Harrington and David Hume. Attention will be paid to the diverse ways these thinkers link questions of social inequality to civil conflict and the relationship between forms of governing and the organisation of social property relations. The paper will also emphasise out the significance of the tension between virtue and self-interest, and the changing shift in emphasis between *fortuna*, providence and progress that takes place in early modernity.