

JSGS 808—ETHICS,  
LEADERSHIP, AND  
TRUST IN THE  
PUBLIC SERVICE

EXECUTIVE BOOK  
SUMMARY

# The Prince

By Niccolò Machiavelli in 1514  
Translated by George Bull

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## About the Author

Machiavelli was born into a wealthy family in 1469. However, his father was a lawyer and had a small income because “he was debarred from any public office as an insolvent debtor of the commune of Florence.” (Britannica, 2007). Therefore, Niccolò grew up in a relatively poor but learned family. He didn’t get a very extensive education and effectively taught himself Latin so that he could study in academia, which is what gives him a distinct tone somewhere between formal and popular.

When he was 29, in 1498, he was given his first job as the head of the second chancery. This office was responsible for the internal affairs of the Florentine Republic and later was integrated into the executive council’s secretariat. As a chancellor, he was sent to a number of foreign and Italian courts instead of a diplomat. In 1500, he went to the French Court, where he was introduced to a country that had a single king and a united country.

When Machiavelli returned, Florence was on the cusp of ruin because of the “ambitions of Cesare Borgia, who was then in the midst of attempting to create a principality for himself in central Italy.” (Britannica, 2007) In 1502, Machiavelli was sent to witness Borgia in action (when Borgia massacred his mutinous captains). This is where Machiavelli began to think concretely about his ideal Prince.

Also around this time, Machiavelli became the most senior advisor to the Chief Magistrate of Florence. In 1504, he began the work of establishing a militia in Florence so that they did not need to rely on mercenaries. Over the next three years, he would ensure that this militia grew in power and importance. In 1507, he went to Germany on a diplomatic mission. When he returned, he wrote about both Germany and Switzerland. In 1509, Pisa capitulated to Florence—in large part due to the militia that Machiavelli had so carefully put together. In 1510, he went to France to try and convince King Louis XII not to start a war with Rome, which would inevitably end in ruin for Florence. Unfortunately, by the time Machiavelli had returned from France and dealt with dismantling Pisa, the Chief magistrate had been deposed and the Medici family had returned to Power.

On the return of the Medici, Machiavelli lost his job and was barred from entering the government buildings. Then, in 1513, Machiavelli was accused of



*Illustrations by Carmen Sandine*

conspiracy against the Medici and thrown in jail to be tortured. He maintained his innocence and was eventually allowed to leave, but with limited freedoms. He moved to the little property outside Florence that his father had left him, lived in poverty and wrote. He wrote *The Prince* in this period as an attempt to get back in the good graces of the Medici family, however he would not return to Florence until 1520 when the Cardinal Giulio de Medici came to govern Florence. Machiavelli was appointed the official historiographer of the republic through the University of Florence. From this position, he progressed to writing for the Pope (who was in fact Giulio, since he became Pope Clement VII).

In mid-1597, the Medici fell and the Republic in Florence was restored. Machiavelli fully expected to be returned to a post with the Magistrate. However, because he had taken a few small favours and worked for Cardinal Medici, he was denied his old post. This refusal was the biggest disappointment of his life; soon after Machiavelli fell ill and died. However, even with his disappointment, he was an ardent supporter of both the republic and liberty until the end.

## Venice: The Heart of the Renaissance

For most of Italy, the middle ages were a long period of decline, disintegration and warfare. By the 14<sup>th</sup> Century the Roman Empire was a dimly-remembered, mythical time. Rome was in ruins; for most of the century the papacy itself was in Avignon, further reducing Rome's economy and influence and the Church's influence over Italian affairs.

Northern Italy was the exception. There, trade and the Crusades opened links to Greece, the Middle East, Central Asia, India and even China. The increasingly powerful and wealthy merchant capitalists of port cities such as Genoa, Pisa and Venice profited from their role in transporting crusaders to Byzantium and the Middle East. They would profit even more when crusaders settled in the Holy Lands and began exporting spices, dyes, silks and other materials. And their fortunes increased even more after the knights of the Fourth Crusade – unable to pay for the services of Venetian merchants contracted to transport them to Egypt – agreed to recapture the city of Zara, a former Venetian colony, then proceeded to sack the Northern Europeans' rival, Byzantium.

Now the major trade routes bypassed Byzantium and goods flowed directly to northern Italy, while the Italians set up “nations” on the shores of the Black Sea, thus controlling the caravan trade across Central Asia.

The Italian city states were not just importers of luxury goods from the East. Merchants and artisans in the Po Valley, which long served as the agricultural hinterland for the coastal city states, were already provisioning the coastal trade, then lending their cash reserves to cash-strapped feudal lords and monarchs. One of these loans was to the English Crown, which repaid the loan by allowing the Italians “to take over the tax collection of his customs, the most valuable commodity through which was the export of raw wool to Flanders,” says University of Chicago political scientist John Padgett. The Florentines used control over wool to force “a coerced division of labor: the Flemish continued to make the textiles, but the Florentines would now do the ‘finishing’ or the dying stage of production, and also sell the finished product.”

In Florence, artisans used dyes from the East to make high-quality textiles. Florentine woolen cloth found its way to France, the Low Countries, Germany and England. Raw wool was imported, first from England and Northern Europe, by the 16<sup>th</sup> Century from Spain. The wool trade made Florence one of Northern Italy's wealthiest cities. The city's increasingly powerful woolens guild, the *Arte della Lana*, monopolized production and export of woolens, making its leaders immensely wealthy. Their fortunes laid the *basis* for the Florentine Renaissance. As the great French historian Fernand Braudel notes in *The Wheels of Commerce*, “The whole panoply of forms of capitalism—commercial, industrial, banking—was already employed in thirteenth century Florence...” Florentine gold coins, florins, became Europe's standard coinage.

In the early 14<sup>th</sup> Century, Flanders was invaded by the French; Florentine control over English wool allowed them to gain control over textile production itself. The initial outlet for Florence's output was provided by the so-called Champagne Fairs – annual meetings of merchants from across Europe held in various towns in southern France. The Florentines now sold their textiles “no longer at fairs but through their own... networks, directly to wealthy consumers. This was the end of the famous caravan-based fairs of Champagne,” notes Padgett.

Manufacturing made Florence wealthy but also *unstable*. In many ways Florence was a prototype for the highly class-divided cities of the industrial revolution. Labourers and artisans knew that while they provided the “golden fleece”, the “golden eggs” went elsewhere. After many uprisings, the workers launched the Chiompi revolt in 1378, taking over the city and installing their own government for several years before being ruthlessly suppressed. The revolt crystallized the complex struggles between artisans who wanted to control the guilds themselves, as well as between competing networks of merchants and bankers.

Likely because they were constantly alert to both outside threat and lower-class revolt – and perhaps also because of the Church's relative lack of influence – the Florentine upper classes were fractious and ruthless. In feudal times, notes Padgett, politics was “essentially the politics of feuding patrilineages, with little else to complicate (it),” particularly the long-lasting struggle between Guelphs and Ghibellines.

By contrast, mercantile-era politics reflected not just class struggle from below but also competition between rival banking or merchant families. They “engaged across the board in violent struggle for domination and control... – in politics, in war, in clerical appointments, and in the streets,” says Padgett. “Merchant-banking remained a part of that, one more weapon in patrilineage civil warfare... every bank was basically on its own, in a Darwinian struggle for survival...”

The constant rivalry of commercial families gave rise to what we call the Florentine Renaissance. By the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, writes Jon Cook in *History Today*, “a number of groups were eager to demonstrate their wealth through artistic patronage. The guilds constantly strove to outdo each other with the extravagance of their artistic commissions, and wealthy individuals built palaces and commissioned altar-pieces or frescoes in churches for their personal glorification and spiritual welfare.”

The ongoing struggle between the Medici and their rivals was just one aspect and outgrowth of the fractious commercial and civic infighting between Florence's merchant families.



## Geography of the Prince: Europe in 1500



Image from: Civics Fanatics Website. Accessed on March 10th, 2013 at <http://forums.civfanatics.com/>



### A Letter to Lorenzo de Medici

In this opening letter that is a preface to the Prince, Machiavelli writes to the young Lorenzo de Medici. As is customary, Machiavelli wants to give the prince a gift. He searched for the most valuable possession he had. He came up with a “little book” as that gift.

Machiavelli acknowledges his low status, but hopes the prince will take some time to read his life’s work. He hopes the prince takes into account his advice. He ends the letter with a request that the prince consider his ideas and remembers Machiavelli’s need for a job.



**Part 1 covers  
chapters 1 to 11**

Figure 1

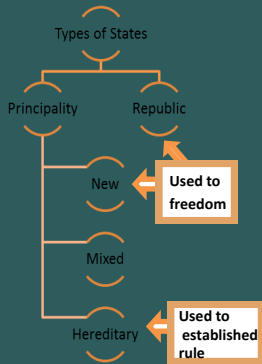
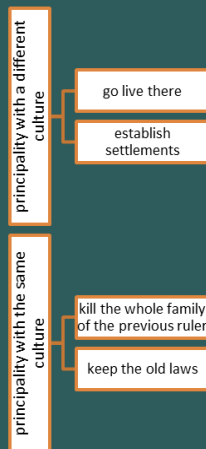


Figure 2



**"It should be born in mind that there is nothing more difficult to handle, more doubtful of success, and more dangerous to carry through than initiating changes in a state's constitution."**  
-Chapter 6

# Part 1: how principalities are organized and won

**Chapter 1: How many kinds of principality there are and the ways in which they are acquired**

There are two kinds of states: republics and principalities. This book focuses on the latter. A new principality is won in two ways: the arms of others or on one's own. If a prince wins a principality on his own, it is because of either fortune or prowess. Please see figure 1.

**Chapter 2: Hereditary Principalities**

Hereditary princes have the easiest time maintaining rule because they need only maintain the status-quo and introduce new policy when the need arises. The only time they will have trouble is when an extraordinary event takes place or the prince provokes grave anger—then his rule is disrupted.



**The Duke of Ferrara**

He lost two battles: in Venice in 1484 and to Pope Julius in 1510. However, he was still able to rule because his family's rule was long established.

**Chapter 3: Mixed Principalities**

Citizens' high hopes for a new ruler are often disappointed because a new prince is caught between those he hurt to get power and those who helped him along the way.



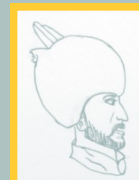
**Louis XII, King of France**

He lost an occupation in Milan twice. The first time had little to do with Louis XII. The second time, he lost because those he hurt would never forget their hardships and he could never repay those that helped him win.

Further, there are two types of acquisitions: a principality with a similar culture and one with a different culture. The way to acquire power is thus different. Please see figure 2.

**Chapter 4: Why the kingdom of Darius, conquered by Alexander, did not rebel against his successors after his death**

When Alexander died shortly after he became the ruler of Asia, it would seem reasonable that he lose his rule in that new place. He did not, though. This is because principalities are governed in two ways: by a prince and his ministers (that he chooses) or by a prince and barons (that are chosen by birth).



**The Turks vs The French**

The Turks are an example of a state run with a ruler and ministers that serve him centrally. It is a hard model to conquer because the ministers are loyal to the same person and power is centralized. However, once you win the state it is easy to keep it because the people are used to centralized control.

The French state is organized by barons who all have their own mini-kingdoms and therefore they have a decentralized power structure with the king having some control but the barons also having regional power. This state is easy to conquer because you can use the barons against the king and take power. However, it is hard to keep because the barons are self-interested and fickle and could turn on you at any moment.

**Chapter 5: How cities or principalities which lived under their own laws should be administered after being conquered**

There are three ways to hold a newly acquired state that is used to living with its own laws:

- ⇒ Devastate them
- ⇒ go live there in person
- ⇒ Let them keep their laws, but set up an oligarchy that is loyal to the prince

But, the best choice is always devastation: when taking over a new principality that used to be a republic, the people will always remember their old laws and so you have to kill them all. If you take over a principality that is already established, you have to kill the whole ruling family so that the people will follow you instead.

**Chapter 6: New principalities acquired by one's own arms and prowess**

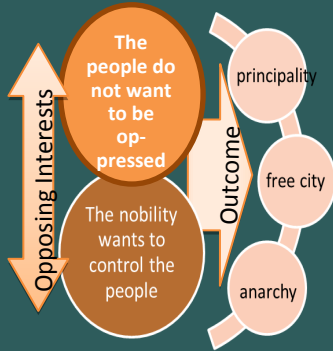
It is human nature to be followers, so a prudent prince will follow what great leaders have already done—he should aim high and know his limitations.

When a private citizen acquires a new principality, it is because of skill or good fortune. However, a prudent prince will not rely on fortune except when it gives him an opportunity to use his skills. Those who use skill to acquire a state have a hard time winning power, but an easy time keeping it.

A new prince that introduces new laws to maintain power will encounter resistance from those who don't like him and skepticism from those who don't know him. They will also face difficulty unless they have the force they need to implement the changes. But—once they have won over the skeptics, killed the resistance and secured their rule with force—they will have an easy time keeping power, as in the case of Hiero of Syracuse, an ordinary citizen with extraordinary talent.

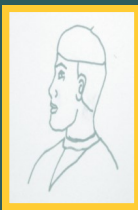
# Part 1: how principalities are organized and won

Figure 3

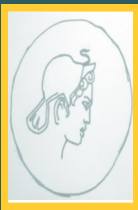


**“Principalities usually come to grief when the transition is being made from limited power to absolutism”**

**-Chapter 9**



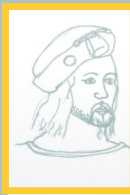
Oliverotto of Formo



Agathocles

## Chapter 7: New Principalities acquired with the help of fortune and foreign arms

A prince that comes to power easily because of fortune (either his or some one else's) will have a very hard keeping that power. If a state is rushed into creation, it will fail.



### Cesare Borgia, Duke of Milan

Cesare Borgia did nearly everything right when he took power using another's arms. In the end, he only lost because of a twist of fate—the death of his ally and his own ill-health. His only mistake was to allow the

naming of a Pope he had previously injured. However, everything else was perfect:

- ⇒ He took the opportunity that the king of France offered when he invaded Italy in order to consolidate his own power in his area and to protect himself from his enemies
- ⇒ He used both force and strategy to maintain his power
- ⇒ He made the people both love and fear him
- ⇒ His soldiers respected and followed him
- ⇒ He destroyed the families that could threaten him or that he had injured
- ⇒ He disbanded foreign armies and made his own

## Chapter 8: Those who come to power by crime

### Agathocles in Sicily vs Oliverotto of Formo

A prince that comes to power because he has tricked the elites, killed them, and taken over control cannot be called honourable but should be studied.

Agathocles was successful in maintaining rule after he took power using crime and deceit, but Formo was not.

The reason for the differential outcomes is because of how they each used cruelty. It is better to use brutality once, to everyone you need to, with the ultimate goal to never use it again because people will eventually forget the one bad act. If you use cruelty a little bit at the start and build on that, you will create too many enemies. You want to hand out the rewards a little bit at a time, instead.

## Chapter 11: Ecclesiastical Principalities

Even if these principalities are won by prowess or fortune, they are kept by the strength of the church, not of the prince. Therefore, they are not like the other principalities because the people do not revolt and the administration is done by God.



### The power of the Pope

Traditionally in Italy, the pope's power was divided and balanced between a number of factions and different principalities. However, because of the use of arms and money, Pope Alexander VI was able to consolidate the power of the Vatican. Then, Pope Julius used that power to drive France out of Italy.

## Chapter 9: The Constitutional Principality

A prince that comes to power because of the fortune of the people or the nobility, which are both found in every principality, requires neither skill nor fortune alone. The dynamic between the nobles and the people is particular, please see figure 3.

### Principality won with the nobility

The nobles will create their own principality if they need to oppress the people

The nobles will always try to safeguard their own power but can be controlled.

Therefore, a prince that wins with the nobles, must immediately befriend the people to protect himself from nobility.

Therefore, a prince is most vulnerable when changing his power from a limited position with the favour of the nobles, to an absolute position with the favour of the people. If he is wise, he will make sure the people always really need him so that their friendship is always required.

### Principality won with the people

The people will find a prince to avoid oppression from the nobles.

The prince will need to stand alone and will never be safe if the people are hostile.

Therefore, a prince must only gain the friendship of the people to maintain power.

## Chapter 10: How the power of every principality should be measured

The best princes can maintain their state without the help of anyone else.

- ⇒ Their army supports themselves and weak neighbours
- ⇒ Their own city is well fortified
- ⇒ Their government is organized in the optimal manner
- ⇒ Their people do not hate them— they understand if an enemy attacks, they will be better off with their prince and feel obligated to follow him.

**“Men do you harm either because they fear you or because they hate you”**  
-Chapter 7

**Part 2 covers  
chapters 12 to  
14**

Armies are discussed in this section because good arms and good laws are what is desired most for any society—but one cannot uphold good laws without good arms.

Figure 4



## Part 2: how to organize an army

### Chapter 12: Military Organization and Mercenary troops

Mercenary troops are the worst kind of troops imaginable. The soldiers are disorganized, disloyal, fickle and power hungry. They tend only to support a prince in time of war, and when there is peace they make trouble. The commanders tend to be bad at their job of war craft, untrustworthy and unscrupulous in their desire to gain power.

Therefore, an army should always be under control of a prince or a republic because a prince has ultimate control and a republic can fire an incompetent commander. A mercenary army is thus unreliable, they tend to make slow progress in battle and when they lose, they lose big.

#### Mercenary Armies in Italy

Italy has had this type of army for many years. The mercenaries knew that the princes in Italy needed them and they knew they would be paid for certain. As such, they were able to create a bloated, ineffective and wasteful army system without any form of retributions. As a result, the armies in Italy have bad practices, are poorly trained and don't carry out their jobs well.

**"[Mercenaries] have led Italy into slavery and ignominy"**

### Chapter 13: Auxiliary, composite, and native troops

Auxiliary troops, or ones that come from a more powerful state to help a principality, are also useless. They can win battles, but the outcome is usually problematic for the prince who calls them. This is because if they lose, they leave; and if they win, a prince is in their debt.

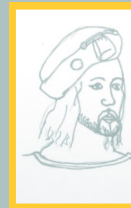
They are more dangerous than a mercenary army because they are united, and completely loyal to somebody other than yourself. At least mercenaries are commissioned by a prince and he therefore has some control.

**"No true victory is possible with alien arms"**



#### David and Goliath

David was given army to go fight Goliath, but he opted to use his own weapons. He did this because he felt most comfortable with them and trusted them. He won in the end.



#### Cesare Borgia

Cesare began with auxiliary armies, but quickly realized they were dangerous. He decided to get mercenaries and found out they were lazy and disorganized. He was not truly respected until he had his own army.

What a prince must learn is how to distinguish evil quickly. He must make sure that he commands his own army because it's the only way to ensure control of one's power.

### Chapter 14: How a prince should organize his militia

The most important skill for a prince is war craft. He should study it when there are times of peace. Peace is not the time for rest, because if a prince does not prepare for war when he has a chance, he will lose when it arrives.

There are two types of preparation: geographic and historical. Geographic knowledge informs strategy because it allows you to know the terrain during battle. When a prince knows his geography, he can use it against his enemies or to protect his own troops.

Historical knowledge informs strategy because it shows him what previous leaders have done—where they have been successful and where they have failed. He can avoid their mistakes and copy their triumph. Please see figure 4.

**"The present ruin  
of Italy has been  
caused by nothing  
else than the  
reliance placed on  
mercenary troops  
for so many years"**

**-Chapter 12**





**Part 3 covers  
chapters 15 to  
19**

“I have thought it proper to represent things as they are in real truth, rather than as they are imagined.”  
-chapter 15

Figure 5

‘Good’ Virtue	‘Bad’ Vice
Generous	miserly
Cruel	Compassionate
Fierce and courageous	Effeminate and cowardly
Courteous	Proud
Pure	Lascivious
Crafty	Guileless
Flexible	Stubborn
Grave	Frivolous
Religious	Skeptical

Figure 6



## Part 3: how best to act

**Chapter 15: The things for which men, and especially princes are praised or blamed**

The world is not made up of good people, and as such, a prince must not only know how to act virtuously, but how not to as well. A prince must be able to understand what qualities can gain praise and which ones gain blame. Please see figure 5.

Princes cannot be all of the ‘good’ qualities. What he must know is which of the ‘bad’ qualities are going to cost him his power and avoid them. He must also not shy away from taking the blame for ‘bad’ qualities that allow him to maintain his power. This is because sometimes the ‘good’ qualities will hinder him and the ‘bad’ qualities will help him.

**Chapter 16: Generosity and Parsimony**

It would be nice to be known for generosity, but it is usually something that creates trouble for a prince. If a prince is generous, he is only acknowledged for said generosity if he is lavish. In time, his expenditures will make him poor, he will need to introduce taxes and the people will despise him. Thus, when he gets into trouble, he will have little support and no money. Being generous is tricky, then, because it usually benefits a few people but upsets a lot more.

Thus, it shouldn’t bother a prince to be called miserly. Eventually the people will see that he does not make them pay for his enterprises, yet he gives them protection and security. Thus, he is benefitting a large number and upsetting very few.

“Miserliness is one of those vices which sustain his rule”

However, a prince can *appear* to be generous by giving away other people’s things—like allowing his troops to take what they want when they successfully invade another place.

“A prince must try to avoid, above all else, being despised and hated; and generosity results in your being both”

**Chapter 17: Cruelty and Compassion; and whether it is better to be loved than feared, or the reverse**

Compassion is ‘good’ but it can be used poorly. If one is too compassionate, it can lead to “disorder and rapine”. Cruelty is another vice that is necessary for a prince, in particular if he has recently acquired power. So, a prince must find a balance between the two.

**So, is it better to be feared than loved?**  
“one would like to be both the one and the other; but because it is difficult to combine them, it is far better to be feared than loved if you cannot be both”

Because of human nature (please see figure 6), men do not love consistently and only in their self-interest. However, they are always motivated by fear. But if a prince must use fear and not love, he must at all costs avoid being hated. He can avoid being hated if:

- ⇒ He does not take from his subjects—including their property and their women.
- ⇒ He justifies his executions

**Hannibal vs Scipio**



Hannibal was able to lead a huge army with all kinds of different cultures and nationalities without a lot of disunity. It was because his cruelty was paired with many other skills in war craft—this made his soldiers fear and respect him.

Unlike Hannibal, Scipio was known for his leniency. This led to a mutiny of his own troops because they felt no fear towards him.

**A prince can control fear, but he cannot control love.**



**Chapter 18: How Princes Should keep their word**

The most successful princes have been able to lie effectively and trick others. They always beat those that are honest. This is because there are two ways to do battle: either by following laws, which is what men do; or by using force, which is what beasts do. A prince must be able to do both—like a combination of the fox and the lion.

So, he should *appear* to be ‘good’ and virtuous, but actually use the ‘bad’ vices to gain power.

“Everyone sees what you appear to be, few experience what you really are.”

**Part 3 covers  
chapters 15 to  
19**

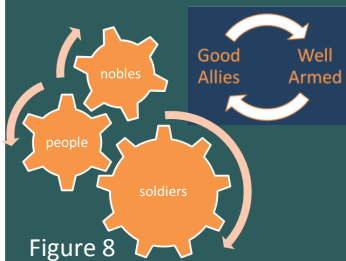


Figure 8



“Take from Severus those parts which are necessary to found his state, and from Marcus those which are proper and glorious to keep a state that may already be stable and firm.” - Chapter 19

## Part 3: how best to act

### Chapter 19: The need to avoid contempt and hatred

A prince must always avoid being despised or hated. A prince will be hated if he takes his people's land or if he steals their wives. Most people will be fine if he does not take this property or honour and then the prince only needs to worry about a few things that are easy to deal with. In order to avoid condemnation or attack, a prince will be despised for a few reasons and can avoid this by being 'good' (please see figure 6).

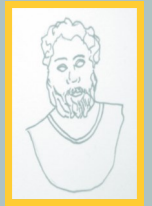
A prince should fear two things: dissent from within his kingdom and threat from outside it. He can protect himself from the outside with good arms and good allies. He can protect himself from the inside with good foreign policy and by stopping conspiracy. To stop conspiracy, a prince must avoid being hated (please see figure 8).

If the prince has the goodwill of his people and a well organized state, he doesn't need to worry about conspiracies. A good example of a well organized state is France because it uses parliament to mitigate the power of the nobles so as not to make the people hate them. Parliament also acts as an acceptable intermediary of power from the nobles to the king.

Princes should always get someone else to do their dirty work. The prince illustrates this through a number of examples from Roman history. Those leaders had to deal with the wants of the people, the desires of the nobles and the cruelty of the soldiers.

#### Marcus Aurelius and Severus

Marcus Aurelius was known for being loving and peaceable. He was able to be such because he owed no one for his power and because he had many skills that gained the respect of others. Severus, on the other hand, was known for being incredible cruel and violent. He was successful in the end because he also was a man of so many other virtues, including valour and cunning, that his soldiers and his people were in awe of him.



“There are two things a prince must fear: internal subversion from his subjects; and external aggression from foreign powers.”

-Chapter 19

**Part 4 covers  
chapters 20 to  
23**

“a prince ought, above all things, always endeavour in every action to gain for himself the reputation of being a great and remarkable man.”

-Chapter 21

“prudence consists in knowing how to distinguish the character of troubles, and for choice to take the lesser evil.” - Chapter 21

## Part 4: strategies for success

### Chapter 20: Whether fortresses and many of the other present-day expedients to which princes have recourse are useful or not

It is good to arm your citizens because when you arm them yourself they are under your control. However, if you have a new principality, you should take away the arms of the citizens in your new principality and only arm the men you brought with you from your old realm.

Don't allow your principality to have factions because should you be invaded, the factions will not unite to protect you. It won't matter what type of fortification you have if there are factions.

In a new principality, It is easier to gain the trust and support of those who began as your enemy than those who wanted to get rid of the old regime.

“The prince who has more to fear from the people than from foreigners ought to build fortresses, but he who has more to fear from foreigners than from the people ought to leave them alone.”

### Chapter 21: How a prince must act to win honour

It's important to set a good example.



#### Ferdinand of Aragon, King of Spain

He rose to power from relative obscurity by knowing how to use religion and favours in the right way. He went on to invade Africa and protect himself effectively against all his enemies.

A prince should always take a side in a decisive manner. This is because a prince does not want ambiguous friendships. Those who are neutral are usually



#### Antiochus

He went to Greece to drive out the Romans. He urged the Acheans to remain neutral during the fight. The Romans told the Acheans that if they did not choose a side, no matter the outcome they would be ruined.

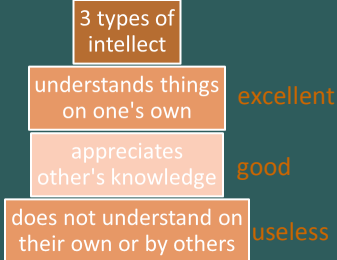
A prince should never create an alliance with a state more powerful than his own. If they win, the prince is indebted and if they lose, they don't have any powerful protection to turn to.

A prince should always improve on his strengths and encourage his people to do the same. He should also make sure to entertain his people with festivals once in a while.



**Part 4 covers chapters 20 to 23**

Figure 9



“a prince who is not wise himself will never take good advice”

-Chapter 23

**Part 5 covers chapters 24 to 26**

“men are attracted more by the present than by the past, and when they find the present good they enjoy it and seek no further”

-Chapter 24



“To all of us this barbarous dominion stinks. Let, therefore, your illustrious house take up this charge with that courage and hope with which all just enterprises are undertaken, so that under its standard our native country may be ennobled”

-Chapter 24

**Part 4: strategies for success**

**Chapter 22: A prince's personal staff**

The people that the prince surrounds himself with are completely up to his discretion. But, those with whom he surrounds himself are also a prince's first impression to others. There are three kinds of intellect (please see figure 9)



**Messer Antonio da Venafro**  
He was a good very good servant, with the first type of intellect. His master, Pandolfo Petrucci, Prince of Siena, was the second type of intellect because he knew to keep Messer da Venafro around and to listen to him.

A good servant is only interested in what a prince needs and wants, not in himself or in others.

In order to keep servants loyal, a prince should treat them well and give them a good life.

**Chapter 23: How flatterers must be shunned**

There are a lot of people in a court that will flatter a prince, which is bad. The best way to avoid this is to have your people know that you want and expect the truth from them.

A prince should pick the wisest men and have them council him. He should listen to the advice of these men and reward the most honest in the group. He should then make a resolute decision and stick to it. If you change your mind too often, based on flattery, you will become despised.



**Fra Luca on Maximilian**  
A servant of a Roman Emperor explained how the latter never listened to advice and never took any council. All of his endeavors failed.

“A prince, therefore, ought always to take counsel, but only when he wishes and not when others wish; he ought rather to discourage every one from offering advice unless he asks it”

A smart prince will know good advice and use it. His councillors are only as smart as he is. Also, he should really only listen to one person at a time.

**Part 5: Why the advice is important**

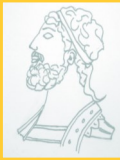
**Chapter 24: Why the Italian princes have lost their states**

It's easier to gain the favour of the people as a new prince than as an old prince. This is because men tend to me more interested in the present than the past.

In a new principality you can easily establish:

- ⇒ Good laws
- ⇒ Good arms
- ⇒ Good allies
- ⇒ Good example

And if you do not, it is due to a lack of wisdom. If a prince has a good arms and does not upset the people or allow the nobility to rebel, he should not have any problem keeping power.



**Phillip of Macedonia**  
exemplifies these principles, because even though his kingdom was small compared to Rome and Greece, he maintained his kingdom through many hardships.

The best policy is to rely on yourself and to excel at

**Chapter 25: How far human affairs are governed by fortune, and how fortune can be opposed**

Some people think the world is governed by fate and therefor we needn't try to change outcomes. However, fortune is only half the story, the other half is governed by a man's free will and intellect.

A river is powerful and out of control, but one can prepare dams and bridges to temper its damage.

A good prince needs to learn how to change with the times.

“The cautious man, when it is time to turn adventurous, does not know how to do it, hence he is ruined; but had he changed his conduct with the times fortune would not have changed.”

Fortune changes all the time, but men tend to want to stay constant. Therefore, it is better to be adventurous and bold in order to keep up with fortune.

**Chapter 26: Exhortation to liberate Italy from the barbarians**

The time is perfect in Italy for a prince to consolidate power and make Italy a great nation. Great nations have all fallen in order to be rebuilt in an even greater way—Italy may be at a low point now, but that just means it will be built even better.

“It is seen also that she is ready and willing to follow a banner if only someone will raise it.”

The house of Medici is the best suited to pick up that banner and unite Italy. But if they want to do that, they need to get their own army and stop relying on the Spanish and the Swiss because they cannot beat the French and the Germans

## Analysis: linking Machiavelli's lessons to the civil service

In *The Prince*, Machiavelli argues for a centralized government with a strong executive power. He outlines the best way to organize one's government and then how to maintain the power within that system. While some of his advice is violent and manipulative, there are many maxims within his work that are applicable to those who govern and their civil servants. Machiavelli was the first political scientist and as such, his maxims are woven into the fabric of our thinking on politics and how we structure states.

A synthesis of his most important lessons are:

- ⇒ If you want something done right, do it yourself
- ⇒ Always make sure that you are self-sufficient
- ⇒ Always seize opportunities because they are rare
- ⇒ Don't forget that everyone needs to have some fun once in a while
- ⇒ Don't treat the people poorly
- ⇒ It is better to do things in-house than to contract out
- ⇒ Always be prepared and well educated
- ⇒ Act with honour and gain the respect of your peers and your followers
- ⇒ Make sure to calculate your risk
- ⇒ Identify good advice and take it
- ⇒ It is important to be able to identify evil quickly
- ⇒ Perception is everything
- ⇒ Be decisive and stick with your decisions
- ⇒ People harm out of fear or hatred; fear can be controlled, hatred cannot
- ⇒ A good prince knows how to change with the times
- ⇒ It is always best to act in a 'good' way but sometimes it's not possible
- ⇒ It is best to surround yourself with friends that are honest
- ⇒ Aim high, but know your limitations as well
- ⇒ A good servant puts the state's needs above their own.
- ⇒ Don't create alliances with those more powerful than yourself
- ⇒ Get someone else to do your dirty work
- ⇒ People are averse to change
- ⇒ It is better to inflict harm with one big action than with repeated minor actions
- ⇒ There is a fine balance between force and strategy

This advice could apply to a ministry within the government, or a branch within an administration. One can see Machiavelli's insight for government in many ways, and the famous terms 'the ends justify the means' is only one aspect of Machiavelli's teachings—his most famous concept is often misused to demonstrate how evil Machiavelli was—however, it is still a contemporary debate within the public service: is process important or is it outcome? Policy decisions within education are an excellent example because they capture this tension. For instance, do we worry about standardized tests or about community learning? Is a university measured on its cumulative grade point average or on student experience?

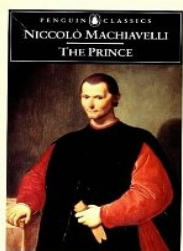
Further, if we were to take other observations from the Prince, we could see they are equally contemporary. We calculate risk all the time within the civil service, and we try to make sure that our advisors are giving good advice. We advocate as a civil service for the well being of the people and a system of controls for the 'nobility' in our communities by ensuring policy that is both equitable and effective. We strive to have a government that is self-sufficient by engaging in sound public finance and debt reduction.

*The Prince* is a political manual. And its teachings, though devised in a vastly different context than today, offer a multitude of observations about human nature and social processes that are as contemporary as they are timeless.

However, not all of his teachings are useful. I don't think it is sound advice to base a state on war. Nor do I think that effeminate qualities are bad. I also do not believe that the best way to consolidate new found power is by killing all of your opponents.

Further, another important question is whether or not his teachings are useful if you do not believe in the wretched nature of man. Or are his ideas perpetuating a masculinity predicated on ruthlessness and shrewd control of power that hinder our community from moving to a more trusting, caring and equal society? Throughout the Prince, Machiavelli outlines a brutish masculinity that shies away from all things 'effeminate' - is this type of dogged attachment to patriarchal values detrimental to our society's ability to embrace different kinds of leadership?

## About the Penguin Classic Edition



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