

## A Manual for the Modern Prince

Niccolo Machiavelli was a brilliant political theoretician and psychologist, and much of what he wrote is still applicable in relation to nation states. Consider, for example, the relevance of the following passage in *The Prince* (completed in 1514) to Israeli (and by extension American) policies in the occupied territories and in the wider Arab world:

... when states are acquired in a province differing in language, in customs, and in institutions, then difficulties arise; and to hold them one must be very fortunate and very assiduous. One of the best, most effective expedients would be for the conqueror to go to live there in person. This course of action would make a new possession more secure and more permanent; and this is what the Turk achieved in Greece. For all the other measures he took, had he not gone to settle there he would have found it impossible to hold that state. Being on the spot, one can detect trouble at the start and deal with it immediately; if one is absent, it is discerned only when it has grown serious, and it is then too late.  
...

The other and better expedient is to establish settlements in one or two places; these will, as it were fetter the state to you. Unless you establish settlements, you will have to garrison large numbers of mounted troops and infantry. Settlements do not cost much, and the prince can found them and maintain them at little or no personal expence. He injures only those from whom he takes land and houses to give to the new inhabitants, and these victims form a tiny minority, and can never do any harm since they remain poor and scattered. ... All the others ... are frightened to do wrong lest what happened to the dispossessed should happen to them. To sum up, settlements are economical and more faithful, and do less harm; and those who are injured cannot hurt you because, as I said, they are scattered and poor. And here it has to be noted that men must be either pampered or crushed, because they can get revenge for small injuries but not for fatal ones. ...

In addition, anyone in a province which differs from his own in the way I described should make himself the leader and protector of the smaller neighbouring powers, and he should endeavour to weaken those which are strong. He should also take precautions to check an invasion of the province by a foreigner as powerful as himself.<sup>1</sup>

However, power is today best exercised in much less ostentatious ways than was common in renaissance Italy. The national state has now become an instrument in your quest for power, for you seek to extend your authority to the whole globe. It is therefore time for us to write a manual for you, the modern prince.

As a modern prince, you must have the linked aims of acquiring as much wealth as possible, safeguarding it against the masses and maintaining a system

---

<sup>1</sup> Machiavelli, N., *The Prince*, pp 36-8 of English translation by George Bull, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1961.

whereby you have complete freedom to use it as you want. Two important principles will help you to do this. The first is anonymity. The successful modern prince will avoid flaunting his power. You will know how to let politicians do this for you; let them strut around self-importantly, while you enjoy the real power and security afforded by your wealth. The second principle is plurality. However tempting it may be, do not aspire to be the richest and most powerful leader in the world. It is sufficient that you belong to an international élite of plutocrats. Certainly you will amuse yourself by playing competitive games with your colleagues, but beware of ever allowing these to develop into wars of annihilation. Your survival as a modern prince depends upon your not becoming a target, and this means being an anonymous member of a relatively invisible plutarchy.

Just as important is the control you and your colleagues exercise over ideology. Together you must act to ensure that congenial ideologies (including religions) flourish and that uncongenial ones perish. The first and most important ideology which you must nurture at all cost is the idea of the free market. In other words, you must maintain the fiction that capitalism is inevitable and moreover that it works to the benefit of all. You will do this by financially supporting and flattering suitable writers, intellectuals, university professors, journalists, and so on. Although I have spoken about your anonymity, such people are well aware of your power and their judgement is easily swayed by the frisson of contact with you. Speak and your words will be regarded as pearls of wisdom, even when they are in reality empty of meaning. You must also use your money to fund suitable university departments, to invest in appropriate newspapers, and to found institutes whose starting point is an acceptance of the capitalist narrative.

Socialism is, of course, your great enemy, and because its analysis is fundamentally true you may need to use quite subtle means to disable it. The simplest method is, of course, simply to undermine efforts to put it into practice. The transfer from a capitalist system to a socialist one is, in the most favourable circumstances, long and difficult; you may well be able to ensure that it is impossibly arduous. When people see that socialism does not work in practice, they may well withdraw their support for it. But this is by no means certain. Truth has a way of coming out, and you will need to be constantly on your guard. Infiltration of socialism has proved to be a much more effective deterrent. Let people go on calling themselves socialists, but make sure that this word is divested of all real meaning. It may well help for you to declare yourself a socialist and for you to join a socialist organisation. At the very least you should think in terms of funding safe socialist parties and thereby putting them in your debt.

Another bitter enemy which you will be obliged to fight is any religion which effectively sets itself in opposition to materialism. Although Christianity purports to do so, it is a religion whose core beliefs are honored more in the breach than in their observance. Church-goers tend to be on your side. With some important exceptions which you will need to pay attention to (e.g. in South America), the priesthood forms part of the establishment. For the moment much the same could be said of Judaism, though this may change. Christian and Jewish injunctions against envy are particularly useful in deflecting revolutionary arguments. Islam, on the other hand, is your primary religious foe for it is becoming a focus for resistance by the poor against

the world order which you wish to sustain. You will therefore do your best to foment Islamophobia, asserting (or more often encouraging your acolytes to do so) that Islam is the enemy of peace, that it is irrational (not more so than any other religion, but no need to emphasise this), that it seeks world dominion, and that Islamic fundamentalism threatens the stability of the Middle East and therefore oil supplies.

Politicians will be your pawns, an unenviable task and one which you must therefore do your best to make palatable. In poor countries where tyranny will be the preferred form of government you will have little difficulty in steering politics in the direction you want. By judicious use of bribes and sponsorship and threats you will maintain the suppression of the people which is a prerequisite for your continued wealth and power. For make no mistake, it is only by keeping three quarters of the world in poverty that the enormous accumulation of capital on which your power rests can be sustained.

In the rich countries the situation is rather more complex, for here the people have to a limited degree wrested power from you, the modern princes. The institution of democracy was designed for this very purpose, but you will do well to extol its virtues rather than attempting to suppress it. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that if it had not been invented, you should have instituted it. The maintenance of a world order which allows the maximum accumulation of capital requires not only that three quarters of the globe remains poor, but that a quarter is composed of relatively rich societies. The reason for this is that you need a sophisticated section of humanity to manage the world economy to your advantage. Once people have risen above a certain level of sophistication and have a degree of leisure in which to reflect on their lives, it becomes more difficult to deceive them about the reality of power. This is why democracy is such a wonderful instrument. For while appearing to make the masses sovereign, in truth it poses little threat to you.

The people in the more prosperous countries must, of course, be encouraged to believe that democracy gives them real power, and here the influence you exercise over the media will be crucial. Newspaper and broadcasting organisations will give the impression that politicians are involved in debating important questions of principle, and that the popular vote at elections is decisive for future prosperity and security. Nothing could be further from the truth, but the fiction serves you very well. Politicians also need to enjoy the illusion of power, and this can often be achieved simply by flattery. It is important, however to ensure that genuine socialists are marginalised, for they pose a *real* threat to your power.

The ideology of democracy has a further benefit. Politicians in the democracies can use the lack of democracy in other countries as an excuse for attacking and exploiting them. The fact that it is a part of your policy to ensure that democracy does *not* spread throughout the world remains obscured from all but the most astute. It is in your interest to ensure that the Third World (perhaps we should rename it the Three-Quarters World) remains in a state of dependency. One way of doing this is to lend large sums of money to the corrupt regimes which you support, in the sure knowledge that they will be unable to repay the loans and will therefore be obliged to bow to your dictates. You will then be able to demand that the ordinary people and resources of these poor countries be exploited in a way which suits you.

This may well foment revolutionary tendencies, but as long as these are handled in such a way as to ensure a stalemate between them and the reactionary forces which you support, everything will work to your advantage. In such circumstances democracy, the ideal which you publicly support but privately oppose, cannot get a foothold.

Armed conflict, so long as it does not threaten your position, is to be encouraged. You will have invested much of your wealth in one of the most profitable branches of commerce, the arms industry. It is therefore very much in your interest to foster war and civil strife. Although you have welcomed the globalisation of capital, you will oppose the globalisation of civic society. Xenophobic nationalism is an essential idea which you will encourage using all the means at your disposal. In fact this will not be particularly difficult, for politicians, sensing despite your flattery that they have little real power, will clutch at nationalism as their saviour. A relatively relaxed, prosperous and happy population might, despite all I have said above, eventually see through the illusions which you have been feeding to them. This would endanger not only you, but also all politicians who have wittingly or unwillingly collaborated with you. However, if your politicians can stir up the people to believe that they face great danger from another people, however, defined, they will boost their own status, and you will gain from the resulting expansion in the arms trade.

I would like in conclusion to say a little about your own psychology. Much of what I have said involves deceiving your fellow-humans about the reality of power. Beware of a sense of guilt about this. Most powerful people develop an illusion about the inevitability and rightness of their power, in other words they come to believe in their own rhetoric. This is to be recommended, but if you cannot achieve it, remember that life is a struggle for survival, and that if you are not on top then someone else will be. You will spend much of your time in the company of other modern princes, and they will help you to develop your sense of inviolability. Avoid too much contact with the masses for they may disturb your equilibrium. Remember above all else that you must be ruthless when it comes to your own interest. When the chips are down no holds are barred.