

# The modern machiavellian prince



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Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* as an instruction manual for all princes to use as a rule book for ruling successfully. Machiavelli stressed the importance of stability in a kingdom and for the ruler to have complete control over his entire kingdom. *The Prince* was written mainly as a guide book for a prince to maintain his power and then to maintain his throne. To Machiavelli's prince, the greatest good would be to have a moral and stable state so cruel actions are justified as protection. The main attribute to Machiavelli's prince is that he must be loved and feared at the same time. A loved prince would result in people willing to do anything for him but they could go against their word unless he was also feared. When Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* in 1513 he dedicated it to Cesare Borgia, his ideal prince. Today, the modern Machiavellian prince attributes are depicted in Vladimir Putin, the Prime Minister of Russia. Putin is loved by his people but makes no attempt to hide the fact that his main goal is to advance Russia's influence on the world and he uses Machiavelli's advice to protect his growing country.

Following Machiavelli's advice of "...always maintaining himself in principedom, unless deprived of it by some extraordinary and irresistible force, and even if so deprived will recover it..." (Machiavelli), Putin recovered his lost Presidential power by becoming the Prime Minister of Russia on May 8, 2008. As Prime Minister, Putin had more power than he did as President: Putin gained government control over the large monopolies and since "nothing increases the reputation of a prince so much as great enterprises" (Machiavelli) people began to trust him more with their finances. Once he had control over the monopolies, he was able to blame the collapse of the Russian economy in August 1998 on the monopolies (Russian Profile). When

Putin gained control over the monopolies he was able to manipulate what the money was being used for and where it was going. With this knowledge, Putin was able to significantly reduce Russia's foreign debt and gain popularity from all class levels.

After being accepted by the upper class because he did not raise taxes, Putin aimed at getting the respect of the lower class. Machiavelli states that a prince should "...shower benefits upon them [the citizens], they are yours; they offer you their blood, their substance, their lives and their children" (Machiavelli 75) and this is exactly what Putin did. The poverty level in Russia was over 30% when Putin became Prime Minister but it dropped to below 17% when he acted upon his ideas (Washington Post). Putin perfected the system of privileges by putting it under complete government control: The system of privileges was designed to help poverty stricken people purchase the food and goods they need to survive (Russia Profile). Strictly following The Prince, Putin made sure that he was considered giving: "It is a good thing to be considered generous. But if liberality is not openly displayed for all to see, no one will ever hear about it" (Machiavelli). Donating money to the Russian army for many years, Putin tried a more public approach; he organized an auction. In this auction Putin auctioned off a painting that he painted for \$1.14 million dollars, promising all of the money to be given to the Russian government to help repair the economy or for any other use they found necessary (New York Times). Putin was able to show people how generous he was and gain more support in the process.

Throughout The Prince, Machiavelli poses the question "It is better to be loved more than feared or feared more than loved? Ideally, one ought to be

both feared and loved” (Machiavelli 70). Putin was defiantly loved by his people but he was afraid that they did not fear him enough. However, he quickly averted their belief that he was there to be their protector. He is, in a sense, protecting the Russian people but he does believe that people should not be punished when they do wrong. Putin resurrected torture colonies which people are sent to when they commit a crime against their country. The colonies range from torture by holding heavy weights and running to some of them imitating Nazi Death Camps. Putin relies on his people to for support and if they do not both love and fear him, he could lose his power forever. After a bitter argument over who played a larger part in World War II, Putin decided to cut off all oil flow to Poland. Putin knows that Russia controls most of the oil and gas and can use controlling it to manipulate countries to collapse to Russia’s desires since oil and gas are necessities. Machiavelli states that “ the wise prince will rely on what he can control and not on what is in the control of others” and Putin ordered a gas cutoff to the Ukraine because “ of a commercial dispute and not a part of Moscow’s long-standing campaign to undermine Ukraine’s pro-Western government” (Washington Post). Putin finally has a weapon he can hold over every country.

Putin is still the Prime Minister of Russia and shows no signs of stopping his search for power. He recently developed a pipeline through Siberia so he can control the flow of oil and gas to all countries. Vladimir Putin is a modern day version of Machiavelli’s prince because he is power hungry for himself but makes it look as if he is doing it for his country. The Prince is all about how well you can lie to your people. They will love and fear you based on what

they see you do, not on what they hear about you. Putin embodies all of the traits that Machiavelli's prince had almost five hundred years ago.

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