

Machiavelli As Understood By an American

Niccolo Machiavelli was an Italian Philosopher from Florence who is best known for his political treatises, *The Prince*. In this book he writes to the king of Florence (Lorenzo Medici) in hopes of getting back in their good graces after being exiled. Since, Machiavelli was stripped of all of his position he offered the one thing he had left, his knowledge from studying history, "...Seeing that it is not possible for me to make a better gift than to offer you the opportunity of understanding in the shortest time all that learnt in so many years..." (Prince, 3). It is note worthy to mention that Machiavelli's ploy worked and he was allowed back into Florence with privilege.

While this is all good for Machiavelli, it is pertinent for the modern day as well. This is because whether consciously or subliminally the figures that shaped modern America followed the principles laid down in Machiavelli's book. Throughout this paper I would like to look at three examples of prominent American figures since the 20th century and illuminate the tactics they followed, which were put in writing by Machiavelli all those years ago. Finally, in the last section I would like to set up the relationship of morals and Machiavelli's philosophy, which can be further explored at a later date.

Machiavelli theorized that the main purpose of power is to maintain and expand itself. Inherently, power has nothing to do with the welfare of the one's subordinates but the ability of an individual to control things. Aside from not caring about the welfare of those under one's influence power has a tenuous relationship with right and wrong;

“[severities] may be called properly used, if of evil it is possible to speak well, that are applied at one blow and are necessary to one's security, and that are not persisted in afterwards, unless they can be turned to the advantage of the subjects.

The badly employed are those which, notwithstanding they may be few in the commencement, multiply with time rather than decrease” (Prince, 31).

This is because all these actions (severities) are only to be a means to an end. While Machiavelli is most closely associated with the phrase, “the ends justify the means” the previously mentioned quote seems to suggest Machiavelli viewed it as a more reciprocal relationship where, ‘the means have to justify the ends’ and ‘the ends must justify the means’. This is a softer over arching-reading of Machiavelli because it puts some restrictions on justifying actions on short-term success.

Machiavelli wrote The Prince, to show how political power has been gained and maintained successfully. Machiavelli was cataloging a thread of political power through history; He punctuates his points with positive and negative examples of figures throughout history, “A wise man ought always to follow the paths beaten by great men, and to those who have been supreme, so that if his ability does not equal theirs, at least it will savor of it” (Prince, 18). Here Machiavelli explains where *The Prince*, derives its validity. The book will tell people what other great men did so that it is easier to copy their actions and learn from their mistakes. From this line of thinking it can be concluded that Machiavelli believes that while history does not repeat, people will react similarly when placed in similar situations (The Prince). Following from this line of thinking one should be able to understand how a book on political theory from the 16th century could still be applicable today, even though

the world is in a vastly different political system. Whether in democratic societies or absolute monarchies, politics appear where there is a government (Case, 23).

To add even more credibility to Machiavelli's writing it should be noted that while his book was written with for a King, his theories can be implemented in any politically competitive situation. Some less considered examples of where Machiavelli's ideas could be advantageous are business, family life, and friendships basically anything where people will be forced to compete with another. One thing to note here though is that Machiavelli's theories would not be applicable for helping one compete in a sport, but it could help one manipulate the peripherals of the sport, the mind state of the other team and the officials. The point trying to be made here is that Machiavelli's theories are just a guide and are most effective when dealing with intangibles like relationships rather than concrete things like a ball going into a basket.

Machiavelli's Theories

Now, that applying a Machiavellian lens to the modern era has been justified it would be useful to clarify some of the traits a leader should possess. Three of the most important characteristics for a leader to possess are cunning, might (of some kind), and luck (fortune). The most crucial attribute a Machiavellian ruler can possess is intelligence.

Without it any leader cannot earn the peoples support, recognize the ideal balance between love and fear, or be knowledgeable on how to utilize his army and weapons in a fight. Intelligence enables a leader to govern his or her land with pride and confidence since they realize that they are the ones who make decisions and not

his assistants or minister's. This allows for a 'the buck stops with me' attitude that enables the ruler to remain in touch with how he is perceived, "...It must be inferred that good counsels, whencesoever they come, are born of wisdom of the prince, and not the wisdom of the prince from the good counsels" (The Prince, 79). If any of his followers' succeed the ruler has succeeded, conversely if they fail though the leader has failed as well.

A leader should have an analytical mind, one that thinks more than it feels, as well as can overcome emotions with reasoning. Essentially, it is vital that logic instead of emotion control a leader's style of action. Intellect is particularly critical when a leader needs to calculate, deduce and discern the consequences of an action (The Prince, 77). This is because emotive thinking inspires transparency, fallibility and self-exposure, which are anti-Machiavellian. Emotions cause a person to act without proper consideration, which enables a competent opponent to manipulate the leaders actions by controlling their emotions.

Emotive thinking prompts to loss of self-control, poor judgment and incorrect deductions as the wrath of an emotional rush takes hold. Emotional thinking is solipsistic (internal) while logical thinking is abstract (external). To perform a good analysis, a leader must search externally and understand the external with least confusion from the internal as could be conceivable. Consequently, according to Machiavelli, when this is achieved a leader can explore (deduce and discern) with remarkable meticulousness, "When you see the servant thinking more of his own interests than of yours, and seeking inwardly his own profit in everything, such a man will never make a good servant nor will you ever be

able to trust him" (The Prince, 77). During analysis, a leader's very own feelings act as an unwelcome diversion. An assessment of others emotions is critical, and it is discussed at length in the Discourses of Livy.

A leader's speed of mind must show itself through the fluency of their speech. To verbally riposte requires competency. Language mastery is a weapon, a leader's voice being the delivery framework, " For it is enough to ask somebody for his weapons without saying, 'I want to kill you with them', because when you have his weapons in hand, you can then satisfy your desire" (Livy, 115). This oratory expertise is imperative, particularly as a defense mechanism to help with rhetorical reversal and deflection.

It might also be utilized as an instrument of cross-examination in order to better understand an individual's sub-text. The eloquence of articulation is especially helpful when one is caught unaware. For instance, say a leader is mentally tested in front of a gathering where there is prevailing pressure for him to react or generally face a penalty. The outcome of the proposed situation is to be determined by the leader's oratory skills because they will need to keep the crowds support at least until they can better compose themselves. In these times when violence is illegal, a leader prioritizes the creation of his or her self-defense through psychological resources. In addition to the fortitude of defensive a good brain has the ability to be used offensively through the influence of others.

Machiavelli continues that a leader must comprehend the nature of every person's emotion so that they may use it to influence individuals into the leader's desired outcomes. Where the leader can feel the same ways others feel, then they

will have the capacity to gather knowledge on the best way to best influence them; however, the leader should not be constrained to the mutual emotion they feel (Discourses, 168). A Machiavellian ruler utilizes this emotion simply as a data point, information that is fundamental to recognizing how to influence a person they are handling effectively; who unlike the ruler is compelled by the essentials of their state of emotion. To summarize it further, a leader should empathize and 'experience' how others feel, while being isolated from compulsions normally accompanied by said feelings. So Machiavelli suggests that, while a leader should feel the same way others feel, one distinguishing factor is that unlike them, they should not instinctively take action on their emotions but instead recognize how the other will act, and make decisions based on all of the gathered information.

According to Machiavellian principles, a leader must develop advanced emotional intelligence. This does not in any way mean that a leader should analyze with emotion; instead, they should be able to not only communicating but also inspiring with it. This is because there is no charm in mechanical behavior; see Hilary Clinton (cir. 2016) for an example. A good leader according to Machiavelli should know the link between emotions by understanding how they appeal and communicate with other emotions Machiavelli held the concept that a political leader should often be gentle, however when essential then they must use any kind of deceit, manipulation, or even murder to accomplish his objectives. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli wrote that:

"Alexander the sixth did nothing else but deceive men, nor ever thought of doing otherwise, and he always found victims; for there never was a man who had greater

power in asserting, or who with greater oaths would affirm a thing, yet would observe it less; nevertheless his deceits always succeeded according to his wishes, because he well understood this side of mankind" (The Prince, 58).

An effective Machiavellian ruler must have some pivotal traits and characteristics, which will be the determining factors on whether the ruler will be prosper or fall. Similarly to have the capacity for this, a leader must have an elaborate understanding of each emotion's features and how deep every emotion is.

A leader's perception of the unseen forces should be very keen. These forces can include others' emotions and motives but are not limited to them. The ruler should build up the muscle of his mind, "Thus it happens in affairs of state, for when the evils that arise have been foreseen... they can be quickly redressed, but when... everyone can see them, there is no longer a remedy" (The Prince, 10). According to Machiavelli, a prince ought to comprehend individuals' words and action on many dimensions: puns, innuendo, and entendre; they are the language subtext and rhetoric. When they cannot penetrate the domain of subtext, they will not be successful Machiavellians. If a ruler is not able to understand the nuances and subtleties of a man's character, then they cannot understand them. As a result, the whole nature of their being goes past the parameters of a ruler's ability to fathom. A subtext is a domain of communication on its own, and if a leader is incognizant with it, it will end up being a weakness and obliviousness will lessen his general success.

Essentially, communication is multi-leveled, and a leader must dependably comprehend what is being said, what is meant and what may potentially be inferred. Only once it is discerned what is truly being said will the necessary action become apparent. Balance every one of the potential outcomes, ascribing techniques for the

probability to every factor dependent on the accessible information, "It is evident on many occasions that humility not only does no good, but may cause harm, especially when it is used with arrogant men who... have conceived a hatred for you" (Livy, 187). A leader ascertains the probability, threat and incentive and only takes action when it is advantageous or fundamental to avoid a loss or misfortune. While a leader may not always settle on right decisions in his interactions, they will decrease the number of mistakes.

With this knowledge, a leader can make strategies in many ways. For instance, with the understanding of what emotions invigorate a man, a leader can play to this feeling by remodeling himself as a source of their desires. This may be necessary to keep individuals reliant on the leader; besides, shared emotions build both rapport and trust, "Every one sees what you appear to be, few really know what you are, and those few dare not oppose themselves to the opinion of the many..." (The Prince, 59). Once one has sufficient information on a specific character, one can become a source of emotional sustenance the other person irrespective of their status or wealth.

According to Machiavelli, this capacity to smoothly transform into an emotional object of desire can facilitate definite influence. The significance of this concept should not be underrated, "...Men are so simple, and so subject to present necessities, that he who seeks to deceive will always find someone who will allow himself to be deceived" (The Prince, 57.) Understanding an individual's social relationships combined requires emotional intelligence but, can be used by a leader

to recognize a person's emotional blind spots. These are weak spots that can be utilized for self-gain should one decide on a more aggressive methodology.

In essence, Machiavellianism necessitates ample socialization and continuous in-field analysis. For a leader, each interaction ought to have significance to it. In these discussions, the prince ought to sum individuals up and have information on them so that he may comprehend their nature. If a leader can do this, they can adjust their character to the other individual's preferences and effectively associate with a diverse range of people. In the process, the leader may also stumble upon valuable information (for instance admissions in confidence and secrets), which can give him power over the said individuals.

The current era, much like Machiavelli's, is one where the ordinary woman and man will greet you with that synthetic variant of themselves, only showing their famous social representative (The Prince, 51). This is the intelligent defense instrument individuals ordinarily utilize that a leader should defeat to be well conversant. Based on this fact, a leader must understand that Machiavellianism is best performed with a demeanor of both humor and charisma. Psychologically, charm is the anesthesia of suspicion and doubt; it enables the user to deeply probe into the mind of others without causing paranoia or pain. Machiavelli states that if people do not feel they may trust the prince, since he cannot make them feel comfortable and content, then any actions taken can cause alienation and ill-feeling (The Prince, 34). Charm or charisma is essential for comfort which is consequently vital for trust to exist. Without trust, a leader's choices for mutual co-operation are restricted.

Politics is a game in which many leaders act behind an inconspicuous motive in the contemporary world. Sometimes, leaders deny themselves some benefits and proclaim giving in publicly. In most times, the motive is to be rewarded with an election or a public acclamation.

Although much of his work is on maintaining the state, Machiavelli asserts that any political ruler is only concerned about acquiring and maintaining power. As a realist political author, Machiavelli critiques the notion of authority by submitting that the concept of right does not contribute to the actual power obtained. For example, Machiavelli gives a reflection of experience with the Florentine government, which shows that being right, and good is not a sufficient condition towards a win or successful maintenance of a political office. According to Machiavelli, power determines any political activity, and as such, any ruler who wants to succeed must know how to use power. He believes that it is only through the appropriate use of power that a ruler can maintain security and safety in a state while receiving obedience from the subjects.

In his political theory, Machiavelli excludes all matters relating to legitimacy and authority while any ruler is making a decision or judgment in politics-related issues. This exclusion is clearly shown in his approach that describes the relationship between law and force. Machiavelli asserts:

“The chief foundations of all states, new as well as old or composite, are good laws and good arms; and as there cannot be good laws where the state is not well armed it follows that where they are well armed they have good laws” (The Prince, 40).

In this statement, Machiavelli argues that a political system with a completely good order must have strong capabilities in order to enforce the agreed upon laws.

Ideally, the good laws and arms would form the foundation for a good government. However, Machiavelli suggests that coercion leads to legality and his concentration shifted to focus on the force.

According to Machiavelli, authority is only possible when there is a power that can enforce it. Thus, Machiavelli concludes that fear than affection is preferable in subjects. He notes, " ...that [men] are ungrateful, fickle, false, cowardly, covetous and as long as you succeed they are yours entirely" (The Prince, 55). Machiavelli observes that despite love being a bond of obligation, many miserable men break it every time they so choose. However, Machiavelli asserts that fear holds these creatures by a regard of the consequences of punishment that could pass, " If men were entirely good this precept would not hold, but because they are bad, and will not keep faith with you, you too are not bound to observe it with them" (The Prince, 57). Therefore, people obey since they fear penalties that they would incur due to non-performance of their obligation as imposed by the power of the government. For instance, subjects may fear to lose privileges or life if they do not meet the requirements as stated in their obligations.

Concurrently, in his political theory, Machiavelli excludes all matters relating to legitimacy and authority while any ruler is making a decision or judgment in issues politics-related issues. Machiavelli believes that people obey in submission to the state's superior power (McCormick). For instance, he observes that anyone who initially thinks that they would not follow a specific law end up submitting to the same law when the state exercises its power or where they develop a fear of state's power. In this case, power is the driver to the enforcement of conflicting views on

whether to submit to the law and to offer to face the consequences when the state exercises its power.

According to Machiavelli, it is useless to claim the right to command or authority without supremacy of political power. He asserts that only rulers who prioritize power instead of authority succeed unlike those that focus on the morally right given the stormy political arena. Thus, the subjects will only acknowledge the authority and laws of states when obedience to power is rendered inescapable. As such to be a successful ruler, special training must be given so that one can decide on the appropriate ways to achieve obedience.

Machiavelli discusses characteristics that a prince should seem to have and consequently would need to develop. When talking about things that would bring blame or praise to the prince, essentially, regardless of what you do to remain in power, one perspective that should not be disregarded is a good public relations (The Prince, 56). Successful rulers must seem to have certain qualities regardless of whether they really do possess them.

According to Machiavelli, a good army and an economic application of violence are a must for a leader to be successful. Machiavelli opens chapter XIV of The Prince by saying that a prince "should have no care or thought but for war" (The Prince, 13). In assembling an army, a leader must recognize that mercenaries, or troops that work solely for pay, are worthless, as are troops borrowed from other princes (The Prince, 43). A wise prince cultivates an army of people from among his citizens whose loyalty is to him and based on civic pride and a sense of fighting for a homeland.

To stay in power, a prince needs to be thinking about war all the time and preparing for it regularly. Not putting war first means a ruler will be held in contempt as weak and this is the worst fate that can befall a leader (The Prince, 13). In being perceived as weak, a prince could lose his kingdom, and in Machiavelli's estimation, that would be a disaster, as the most important goal for a prince is to stay in power. A prince, therefore, must always be prepared to go to war because;

“...[one] cannot rely upon what he observes in quiet times, when citizens have need of the state, because then everyone agrees with him; they all promise, and when death is far distant they all wish to die for him; but in troubled times when the state has need of its citizens, then he finds but few. And so much the more is this experiment dangerous, in as much as it can only be tried once” (The Prince, 34).

Whether this is metaphorical or literal all threats should be handled swiftly. A unified principality that has both loyalty and respect for their leader will work together courageously against threats and will support the cause and policies of their leader.

However, according to Machiavelli, this must be founded on the subjects' trust towards their ruler. Most importantly, power is the first and supreme state of security. Machiavelli states that, "Since love and fear can hardly exist together if we must choose between them, it is far safer to be feared than loved" (The Prince, 55). From the statement, we realize Machiavelli's appetite for a strong, ruthless prince who can provide security to his subjects.

Machiavelli recognizes that others generally praise a leader who keeps his promise. However, historical experiences show that ruler accomplishes more when they are cunning, crafty, and able to trick other people. . According to Machiavellian

principles, there are two different methods for a leader to challenge opposition; either by power or by law. Laws come to men naturally, while force works efficiently for beasts, or the less educated men. With the end goal to succeed, the prince has to learn how to fight the two, and with power, he must first become half beast and half man. Likewise, Machiavelli asserts that since the law is not inherently adequate; rulers could utilize power to pacify opposing interests.

This implies that if a leader decides to use force, he is acting like a beast. To clarify this point, Machiavelli used an example of the fox and the lion. He asserts that;

“A prince, therefore, being compelled knowingly to adopt the beast, ought to choose the fox and the lion; because the lion cannot defend himself against snares and the fox cannot defend himself against wolves. Therefore, it is necessary to be a fox to discover the snares and a lion to terrify the wolves” (The Prince, 57).

Thus, in Machiavelli's view, in the event the need arises, a prince must be not only insidious but also ruthless to achieve their objectives. Machiavellianism insists that while rulers are taking brutal action, they need to conceal their actions and intentions from the general public. In handling subjects, a leader has to break his promises when they disadvantage him and when the purposes behind the pledges he made no longer exist (The Prince, 57). From the same line of thinking, a promise is not something to which a leader can depend on since men are naturally deceitful and wretched. Therefore, according to Machiavelli, the prince has to be the master of deception.

Most importantly, a leader must avoid the hatred of your subjects especially the hatred of the most powerful at all costs. Machiavelli states that;

“...One of the great means of exercising prudence that men can employ is to abstain either from threatening anyone or from injuring them with words, for neither of these actions takes any strength away from the enemy, but the first makes him more cautious and the second increases his hatred of you and makes him think more actively of harming you”(Discourses, 228)

A leader might be criticized for lacking virtue, yet will never be detested for it. However, he will be loathed if he takes the wives or property of his people (The Prince, 59). A ruler should likewise abstain from plundering their people of their honor. For they will be detested if their ruler has a notoriety for being irresolute, cowardly, effeminate, frivolous, or fickle. If his people highly regard a leader, he will be protected from open attacks and conspiracies. Here Machiavelli points out that a ruler should worry over two things: external threats from foreign forces and internal insurgency from his people.

Defending against external foes requires good allies and a strong military. This means that a ruler can defend himself against internal rebellion by ensuring that he is not scorned or hated by his subjects (The prince, 73). According to Machiavelli, this is an incredible defense against conspiracies. A schemer will only have the strength to continue with his scheme if he believes the public will be pleased when the leader is killed.

However, if killing the prince would annoy subjects, conspirators will never have the nerve to conspire. Naturally, conspiracies are disadvantaged. They require the help of many individuals, every one of whom faces severe punishment even death if the scheme is exposed. Moreover, every one of these individuals can benefit richly by informing the ruler about the scheme (Livy, 261). A leader has the entire

government on his side, laws of the state and his allies. In case he has the good will of his subjects, a leader becomes invulnerable to his conspirators.

According to Machiavelli, the prince should be supportive of his people since, without their support, his decisions cannot be acted upon. The significance of the support from the people is explained in every part of book *The Prince*. Machiavelli states that without support, even military action cannot be feasible without mercenary or auxiliary units, maintaining power, as a prince is therefore not probable. If the public fails to believe in the prince's cause, they will not join the fight;

“Upon this, one has to remark that men ought either to be well treated or crushed, because they can avenge themselves of lighter injuries, of the more serious ones they cannot; Therefore, the injury that is to be done to a man ought to be of such a kind that one does not stand in fear of revenge” (*The Prince*, 9).

So while the leader does have free reign in the actions they take Machiavelli would advocate for intense thought about how ones actions will affect others.

If a prince is not fulfilling his subject's fundamental needs or even worse actively hurting them, then the people may revolt and either expel the leader from their land or assassinate them.

Conversely, an ungenerous or parsimonious leader can be seen as miserly at first; however he will, in the long run, gain a reputation for liberality. According to Machiavellianism, A ruler who is frugal and thrifty will in the end have adequate resources to protect against aggression and finance important projects without unduly burdening his subjects with taxes.

Perhaps historically, the activities of Pope Julius II support the perception that miserliness enables a leader to make great achievements. Majority of the people contend that successful rulers have become powerful and sustained their power through generosity, for instance, Julius Caesar. However, if Caesar had been alive much longer, he could have eventually discovered that sustaining his authority necessitated regulating his spending (The Prince, 53). Thus, generosity in itself is self-defeating since it exhausts all resources and forestalls further generosity, "...For even whilst you exercise it you lose the power to do so, and so become either poor or despised, or else, in avoiding poverty, rapacious and hated" (The Prince, 53). Basically, the gifts one gives will become expected and thus require one to give more. In addition, the people whom one did not give anything to could have their feelings hurt thus damaging their opinion of the gift-giver. To conclude, while frugality may prompt initial negative feelings, generosity, on the other hand, will in the long run cause hatred.

Finally, the most enigmatic and least controllable characteristic for a leader to have is luck. Luck, theoretically, controls every aspect of a person's life. Therefore, it only makes sense that it would be a key component to a person's political success.

"I conclude, therefore that, fortune being changeful and mankind steadfast in their ways, so long as the two are in agreement men are successful, but unsuccessful when they fall out. For my part I consider that it is better to be adventurous than cautious..." (The Prince, 83).

While it is nice that Machiavelli, does offer the reader some advise, it is still confusing as 'be adventurous' could have many different meanings to different people. Perhaps, Machiavelli means it this way so that people can step outside of

their own comfort zone to improve themselves. While this charitable reading makes sense, it still feels as though something is missing. This is because Machiavelli has given fairly clear instructions up until now about what steps to take in which situation in order to have the best results.

Aside from the praise Machiavelli has for fortune, he also has some concerns about it. Mainly, Machiavelli has noticed that people are often at their peak right before they meet their downfall (Livy, 235). Going on Machiavelli contends that the future is unknowable and as such people should go about their lives assuming their actions will work out:

“[Men] must never give up, for without knowing [fortune's] goals as she moves along paths both crossed and unknown, men always have to hope, and with hope, they should never give up, no matter what the situation or the difficulty in which they find themselves” (Livy, 236).

With the additional reading, one can infer that the practical action one should take from Machiavelli's theory is to take actions assuming the best is possible but so is the worst. However, if one's adventurous actions don't work out, they can feel less bad about the outcome because they know fortune wasn't with them at the moment. So while fortune is still not the most clear-cut thing Machiavelli lays out, it is possibly the most important.

According to Machiavelli, during times of frustration, a leader will have the capacity to proactively evaluate the consequence of a poor decision and adjust his strategy accordingly. A leader is allowed to commit errors since this is how they refine their strategies (The Prince, 80). However, damage control ought to be a top

priority at whatever point they make any socially risky error. In this way a leader is still limited in the options that they are able to take.

Machiavelli Conclusion

In essence, leadership may be seen either as a personal quality or pattern of behavior. As a pattern of behavior, it is the influence exerted by a group or a person over a body to direct or arrange its actions or efforts towards the accomplishment of chosen objectives. Being a personal quality, leadership enables one to exert influence over others. According to Machiavelli, a prince must be virtuous and in some instances immoral to achieve his objectives. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli asserted that a great Prince must break his promises in some situations for practical advantages, therefore must be not only virtuous but also vicious.

In both his two books, Machiavelli tells us about the critical and essential characteristics of a successful leader or prince. The first and most imperative trait is to be able to provide security to his nation and amass power in his hands. Power is the most predominant part of Machiavellian philosophy and it must, therefore, come first for a united and safe principedom can exist. He should utilize all possible avenues to secure and protect his power. In the absence of a powerful central administration, no state can sustain its existence because a power-lacking state is subject to both external and internal rebellions. In the *Discourses on Livy*, Machiavelli states that men are easily corruptible and therefore a government must guard against its citizen's intentions (Livy, 113).

Subjects of a principedom must fear, be loyal to and respect their ruler.

Machiavellianism argues that it is good for subjects to be allowed to do what they desire without feeling oppressed. Nevertheless, Machiavelli also believed that freedom or liberty without restrictions, in the long run, destroys itself (Livy, xix). Thus, Machiavelli contends that a great political system gives freedom limits, for it not to be self-defeating. Also, it would have the capacity to save itself from internal corruption and external attack so that it can sustain its defensive control over the liberty (The Prince, 53). The name Machiavelli provides for this self-continuing, controlled freedom is liberty.

Many of the authors who mirrored Machiavelli's work argued that the right use of political power was possible when the ruler had a strictly good character. The authors asserted that rulers were right when they did well, and earned respect and obedience from the subject as long as they presented themselves as morally upright and virtuous. Machiavelli, in his book *The Prince*, argues that there are no moral or ethical bases to differentiate between legitimate use of power as well as the illegitimate means through which a leader can exercise power, "Hence it is necessary for a prince wishing to hold his own to know how to do wrong, and to make use of it or not according to necessity" (The Prince, 50). Machiavelli's focus in his book *The Prince* is on monarchial and autocratic government formations, which guide the prince on the appropriate ways to rule. Machiavelli asserts that power and authority are equal. Also, he suggests that anyone with power can command, "...there is no more effective or necessary remedy for restraining a multitude than the presence of a single man who appears in person and is revered" (Livy, 133). Alas, being good neither earns power nor adds authority just by being kind. Both

Presidents exemplify some Machiavellian principles, to maintain political power; both individuals hold that deceit and craft are justifiable in the pursuit of a greater goal.

Since Machiavelli's principle isolate power from morality, both Protestants and Catholics have censured Machiavellian theories for centuries on the grounds that they promote acting in an evil manner. His methods for amassing power are unquestionably unparalleled. However, Machiavelli was not concerned with the notion of how to be a good Christian or even a good person. He wasn't in any way inspired by what a leader does as per the Bible, instead what a leader must do given the true nature of the conditions. Machiavelli was seeking the truth concerning amassing and maintaining power with regards to a sinful and real society;

“...He need not make himself uneasy at incurring a reproach for those vices without which the state can only be saved with difficulty, for if everything is considered carefully, it will be found that something which looks like virtue if followed would be his ruin; Whilst something else, which looks like vice, yet followed brings him security and prosperity” (The Prince, 50).

Though it should be stated that Machiavelli did not believe in seeking evil for the sake of evil; instead, if the best approach to acquire power and keep it is to take actions that one may consider malevolent, a leader must. Thus, in the contest of power, what is good and what is evil are never considered, as they have no bearing on the actions needed.

Obama

Barrack Obama became the 44th president of the U.S. because he captured the imagination of the masses (Wise, 26). Obama was able to accomplish this despite

being a relatively new politician. During his eight years as president, he was able to achieve a lot for the Country. His achievements range from policies, domestic affairs, and foreign affairs among others. In most instances, President Obama used to cajole, make outstanding speeches, and pledges to appear sincere and loyal. Promises and profound oration helped Obama convince the electorate that he was the best U.S. president (Cetina). There is a good chance that Machiavellian principles enabled Obama to win elections in 2008 and re-election in 2012. In the end, this approach was a well-choreographed political theory to win and retain political power.

Obama led a major healthcare reform when he successfully enacted the Affordable Care Act in 2010. The enactment of the law led to the growth of the healthcare sector and brought general happiness among many Americans (Jacobs). Additionally, it enhanced the reduction in costs related to treatment and emergencies. Most significantly, ninety-five per cent of the Americans were placed on health insurance in 2014 (Center). Equally, the enactment of the A.C.A enhanced economic growth since insurance firms got better deals from many clients since the government now backed them. Although the actual healthcare bill was passed and signed into law, the president with the help of the Congress removed many of the benefits Obama had promised during his campaign.

Even though when Obama took office the Democrats had a majority in congress, the bill that would have given American's truly free health-care would not pass. Instead, the powers that be were able to stall and weaken the bill until it resembled the healthcare plan originally implemented by Mitt Romney, a Republican, in the state of Massachusetts (Isikoff). It is weird that when the

Democrats control both the legislative and executive branch the country ends up with a Republican health-care proposal. The reason this is Machiavellian is because the democrats would receive no direct benefit from helping the citizen of their country but they do receive money from the healthcare industry. So while universal health care was brought up to encourage support, the Democratic Party did not support it as fully as it had said it would. This resulted in the democrats getting a legislative victory without harming their future finances. The process of enactment is Machiavellian as it allowed Obama to gain a victory for his constituents while at the same time remaining in the good graces of his political allies, who benefit from corporate health-care donations.

Obama also enacted legislation that set the new standards on fuel productivity in 2012 (Bang, 168). The regulation aims to ensure a reduction in oil consumption by twelve billion containers by 2025. The decline in oil consumption would save 1.7 trillion dollars, which would eventually raise the economy. Notably, California and the other twelve states have accepted the directive (Bang, 171). Car manufacturers now are required to manufacture vehicles that meet these strict standards without any alternative.

Thus, Obama's enactment of the law is Machiavellian in that his subjects have not moral authority to resist but to submit under the sovereign power. This action is acceptable however because it is for the benefit of the entire country. It helps the country by helping to mitigate global warming damages. Setting fuel standards will make it slightly more difficult for car manufactures because it is another regulation they will have to contend with. However, since more people will be helped than

harmed and this action will contribute to the future success of the country, it is safe to say Machiavelli would be content with this use of executive power.

According to *The Prince*, the decision by the leader is final on the subjects. The ruler runs the country the way they want and can make the decisions at their discretion. Obama used his executive power to end the 2008 recession by signing into law his \$787 billion economic stimulus package that had been approved by the Congress. This move led to a reduction in the unemployment rate from 10% to 4.7% for six years (Jacobson, 33). The recession gradually ended in July 2009 when the G.D.P increased giving a positive outcome. Thus, Obama's power played a significant role in setting the direction for the economy as well as jobs for his subjects. This can also be seen the list of officials which Obama implemented which were selected for him by the offices of Citi-bank (RT). So, even while Obama was regulating the banks he was still listening to what they have to say. Obama perfectly hide his true motivations to the point where they are still obscured.

In July 2010, Obama appended his presidential signature on the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform Act. This legislation improved regulation of the areas that led to financial crises (Chaffee). Under President's Obamas administration many pieces of legislation were enacted to regulate the economic sector, in an attempt to reduce the debts and increase profits. This achievement in Obama's administration relates to Machiavellian tactics in the book *The Prince* since all the legislation were meant to improve the economy while controlling the state's financial crises.

Since 1960, Obama was the first dedicated president to enhance the liberty of prisoners through his criminal and justice reforms. Obama presided over the

reduction of population in the federal prisons (Obama). Because of the reforms in the criminal justice systems, Obama's regime had few reports on crime rates. Consequently, his administration through the criminal justice administrators issued a circular on drugs policy. For instance, an issue was made notifying all persecutors not to prosecute marijuana users or manufacturers because they were doing their business according to the law governing it in 2009. Obama also assented to the Consolidated Appropriation Act (Martin). The legislation was aimed at the cancellation of a twenty-one-year-old prohibition on federal funding of needle exchange program. The slow government response in Obama's Presidency resulted in the rise in opioid mortality. In this case, the delayed response did not meet the Machiavellian principle of benefit to all. However, Obama's action to reduce the federal prison populace is in itself Machiavellian in that the majority of prisoners enjoyed their liberty.

Obama's administration had huge support from the Senate and the Supreme Court on the extension of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights. To enhance liberty and equality among all citizens of various orientations, Obama signed the 2010 Repeal Act, which allows the LGBT to find jobs in the military (Obama). According to the president, the bill together with ENDA would eliminate discrimination against employees based on their sexual identity or gender. Even though the bills faced many challenges during the passage, Obama became the first president to support same-sex marriage openly. Obama is on record as the president who issued most executive orders to protect the LGBT group. He even

encouraged other countries through foreign diplomacy to embrace it because it promoted equality.

Obama's appointments in his government were made uniquely. For instance, the appointment of Bolden as the NASA administrator in 2009 was meant to enhance developmental progress. Obama wanted to make his subjects proud by ensuring that the first person to reach Mars was an American. In this view, his actions of developing Commercial Crew for NASA as well as the Commercial Orbital Transport Services that would cooperate with private flight companies would be considered Machiavellian because it was meant to be of good to the entire state (Obama). Furthermore, the choice for appointments to the cabinet and the judiciary showed that Obama had interests of the general public at heart and was ready to promote equality to all. Notably, he had immigrants in his administration. This inclusion activity would be considered Machiavellian because the *Discourses* argue that there should be equity to enhance freedom of the masses.

Trump

On the other hand, President Trump used to coax and chatter about winning the electorate (O'Hara). Before joining politics, Donald Trump was a 'supposedly' wealthy businessman and a reality television personality. In 2016, Trump ran against Hillary Clinton and won to become the 45th president of the United States of America. Ever since taking office, his administration has faced significant criticisms and selective praises, especially concerning the policies implemented which are in line with Machiavelli's principles.

He made many promises that made him appear as a loyal politician. This approach made him a tenacious winner over his competitor in the 2016 elections, despite his intellectual handicaps. Trump won the 2016 elections because of his effective strategies during his campaign. He made different promises to the electorate, which he knew he could not fulfill once he was elected. Additionally, he made defamatory statements against his opponent by digging into Clinton's past, bringing to light some of her mistakes when she was in the government and also her personal life. This approach shows someone around Trump was aware of his lack of intellect and shifted their strategy to benefit from Trump's perceived personal-ability.

Even before his victory in the 2016 presidential elections, Trump had a combative relationship with media. When he got to power, he called the media to spread *fake news and the enemy of the people* (O'Hara). Both in public and in private, Trump is always ready to attack any journalist who critiques his administration. President Trump has been quoted in his inauguration ceremony referring to the media as *most dishonest human beings on earth* because they seemingly devalued the size of the crowd that day. Trump's administration has had a sour relationship with media and on February 24, *The New York Times*, *CNN*, *Politico*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Buzz Feed News* journalists were blocked from attending a briefing with Press Secretary Sean Spicer (O'Hara). Trump's administration approach to media criticism is Machiavellian because in the combative approach many loss track of the argument and have trouble distinguishing fact from fiction.

Machiavelli discusses characteristics that a prince should seem to have and consequently would need to develop. When talking about things that would bring blame or praise to the prince, essentially, regardless of what you do to remain in power, one perspective that should not be disregarded is a good public relations (The Prince, 51). Successful rulers must seem to have certain qualities regardless of whether they do not have them.

Another time Trump illustrates Machiavelli's principles, is when he has underlings perform unfavorable tasks for him and then distances himself from them after they are no longer useful. As the sovereign leader, Trump fired security adviser Michael Flynn because he gave falsified information with the Russian Ambassador to the U.S., which eventually misled the vice president (Isikoff and Corn). Flynn was also said to communicate with Russia on matters of the 2016 election. Trump also fired the FBI director James Comey and Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson because of consistent disagreements on policies, especially on foreign affairs. Thus, Trump exercised his supreme power to fire his critical top government officials after they had outlived their potential usefulness. Flynn was fired and prosecuted after he had already helped Trump obtain power, The same could be said for Tillerson because of his connections to Exxon and their Billion dollar deal with Russia, which was threatened by the previous administration's sanctions (Mazneva). After Trump had what he needed from them they are thrown to the side and distanced from the president so that their actions do not appear sanctioned. Machiavelli makes this exact point, " so, to clear himself in the minds of the people and gain them entirely to himself he desired to show that, if any cruelty had been practiced, it had not

originated with him, but in the natural sternness of the minister" (The Prince, 25)

This allows Trump to reap the benefit from the two advisors without incurring the harm of being seen to support them.

Using his sovereign power as president, Trump has used his presidential powers to pardon lawbreakers, who support his policies. For instance, Sheriff Arpaio was pardoned for obstructing justice in August 2017 (Johnson, 289). Trump also pardoned Kristian Saucier; a sailor convicted of taking photos onboard a nuclear submarine, and he pardoned an old lady who was convicted of drug-related charges after he had a meeting with Kim Kardashian alongside others. Trump has been accused of only forgiving public figures and ignoring the very many applications sent to him from various rehabilitation facilities. Trump is using his power of the pardon in a Machiavellian manner because he doing so in order to increase his power. For example, Trump pardoning the Sheriff sends a message to his other supporters that as long as Trump has your support you can break the law. And concerning the lady who was released from a drug dealing charge, something which goes against Trump's personal philosophy, she was released during the same time Kardashian's husband, a black entertainer had endorsed trump. This allowed Trump to better shield himself from the charges that he was a racist (Wilkie). So while he sacrificed his personal morals Trump did so to gain a political advantage. Nothing is more Machiavellian than that.

Those one favors will appreciate your patronage and help one secure the rest. Even those who don't benefit from it will understand the necessity of your favoritism, he adds:

“Thus, since men are not completely mad in matters concerning their lives and property, when conspirators see that they are weak they become cautious, and when grow tired of a ruler they turn to cursing him, and they wait for those with greater merits than their own to avenge them” (Discourses, 259).

It's also true that those who don't benefit may support you with the hope that, seeing how you rewarded others, believe they, too, can gain some benefit from being supportive of you. Where possible, put your people in place to watch your back: on boards, committees, or even on staff, especially those who are your long-time allies and supporters (The Prince, 33). Those who became your allies inside the municipality before you came to office you want to keep, but slowly weaken and sideline them over time, so only your staunchest supporters have any authority.

Trump's economic policies are aimed at benefitting the entire country by lowering the unemployment rate while raising the country's gross domestic product. In July 2018, President Trump's administration had created 3.7 million jobs since they got into office (O'Hara). Trump hopes to raise the gross domestic product by over 4.5%. As a shrewd businessman, the president has greatly improved the general US economy. His policies are Machiavellian because they seek to benefit the entire US population with better GDP and economic growth. His federal infrastructural plan of \$1.5 trillion is still at the Congress, yet it should be discussed and approved to the benefit of the entire country (O'Hara).

Trump uses his personal Twitter account, to communicate on his personal and official messages (Kreis, 609). However, White House staff use his official account of the *POTUS*. Trump communicates the firing of his Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, on Twitter. Majority of people believe that Trump's tweets are vengeful,

bullying and impulsive given that they are posted early morning or late at night. For instance, Trump has a record of taking to twitter his disappointments, especially when federal judges rule against his will in court cases. Trump has been sued for blocking followers, where the courts have ruled that he should unblock all followers since he is the President (Kreis, 614). His perspective on the use of Twitter is also Machiavellian because his focus is to reach out to the masses all over the country and beyond. As a president, his views are beneficial to the entire country, and everyone should have the privilege to learn about what he is communicating.

Trump's drug policy is contrary to Obama's. He asserts that federal prosecutors should seek maximum sentencing for drug offenders, unlike Obama who ordered for reduced sentences for minor drug-related offenders. Trump was also against Obama's climate change policies and led the US out of Paris Agreement, which had 200 countries committing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Johnson, 289). Despite being anti-Obama reforms, Trump also signed an executive order that made federal agencies to slash over ninety regulations that controlled financial consequences against banks. Trump's efforts are Machiavellian in that Trump is focused on making reforms that would give him mileage in the next elections. However, some of his actions are hopefully meant for the overall benefit of the populace while making better negotiations for his country.

How the Presidents could have been more Machiavellian

While neither president is a perfect Machiavellian, Obama probably exemplifies the ideals more than Trump. The place this is most obvious is in the legacy or result of the presidents actions. While Obama did make some decisions

that will taint his legacy, overall he will be looked upon fondly. This is because he has not done anything excessively evil. In fact, every immoral thing one could accuse Obama of could be said of many previous presidents. The most common criticism being that the banks got away with too much. Machiavelli said it the best though, "Because men, when they receive good from him whom they were expecting evil, are bound more closely to their benefactor" (The Prince, 34). Obama did do a lot to protect the environment and advance the LGBT agenda. Since it is unusual for the environment or non-heterosexual issues to be championed by the president, Obama will have earned some strong supporters. At the same time, his democratic detractors have to concede that he was no worse than his predecessor, thus making it more likely his discretions will fade away with time.

Trump, on the other-hand, does not have any policies, which are likely to stand the test of time. A reason for this is that Trump has not pursued a policy, which is beneficial to others, that would not also benefit him. The only policy, which this may be arguable for, is the border wall. However, when one realizes that Trump's posturing over the border wall is just to distract from the economic policies, which are being implemented. This is Machiavellian, as Trump is disguising his intentions. Although, the fact that he is doing so for his own personal benefit at the detriment of the country would disappoint Machiavelli.

According to Machiavelli, to amass power, a leader should reward favor. Destroying the old leadership, select new administrators, establishing a respectable administration, seem to be similar blueprints for different parts of the human struggle for power (Livy, xx). In the United States, every four years, a rendition of

this power change happens on a small scale. By changing presidents, an entirely new leadership is created. So, Obama is able to work with the banks at the same time he is supposed to be policing them. Obama can be seen benefiting from this by the payments for speeches after his presidency (Buncombe). Trump uses his appointments to reward his most loyal supporters but doesn't hesitate to use them to shield himself. This can be seen in the previous Flynn example. Neither of these actions looks as though it will result in the best for the country though. So both presidents fail to achieve Machiavelli's ideals, "...while the act accuses [one], the result excuses [them]..." (Livy, xvii). However, it still feels right to call their manipulative behavior Machiavellian. This is strange because Machiavelli is for more than just manipulation.

Misunderstanding of Machiavellian philosophy in the modern day

Being a Machiavellian has different meanings to different people within today's society. This is because the term has three distinct connotations. First it can be used to represent one who follows Machiavelli's philosophy. Second, it is a psychological category for a personality type, "Machiavellianism is associated with a cold, cynical, amoral worldview and detached, strategic manipulateness" (Wissing). And colloquially it has been used to describe one who manipulates others to get their way.

It is worth noting that Machiavellianism is regularly misunderstood. It might be conceivable that he created the motto "the ends justify the means," and regardless of whether he did not, Machiavellianism has turned out to be synonymous with an eagerness to utilize any methods to accomplish a preferred

objectives; thus it is easier to see why people understanding him as an unethical utilitarian. But, understanding him along these lines misses the element of his ruthless realism. So while the Psychological and vernacular definition of Machiavellian are similar they differ from Machiavelli's own philosophy in a distinct way.

When a utilitarian utilizes the expression, it implies that every action is justified; provided its outcomes are better than anything they could have been if the action had not been taken. The real issue is that it is difficult to use except if one is omniscient. This is because there is no real way to tell if the consequences of a particular action will indeed be better than that of the other action; they can have a higher likelihood of being better, yet there is no way of knowing for certain. Additionally, those actions, which have an immediate and good impact, can cause more adverse outcomes in the long run; the feature is near impossible to predict after all. Besides, according to Machiavelli, an action with many positive outcomes may have terrible repercussions later.

Conversely, Machiavelli's philosophy contends that every action is justifiable if the available alternative is inherently self-defeating. Machiavelli knew that a leader cannot foresee the precise result of his action, yet he believed that so much can be gained from past errors and that occasionally it is good to place limits on liberty, even if curtailing it is tyrannical.

Perhaps, the cause of this disparity between the ideal state and the one that can exist in reality is an essential imperfection in human nature. Machiavellianism does not investigate the reason for the shortcoming, it only considers past examples

and infers, "Thus we see miraculous losses and miraculous gains every day, because when men possess little that exceptional ability, Fortune shows her power all the more" (Livy, 239).

Modern politics are based on personal and party's interests where leaders focus on achieving their manifesto. In most times, politicians' interest is on winning the next elections rather than leaving a lasting legacy that the subjects will always remember. Notably, the comparison between Obama's and Trump's administration reveals that every leader seeks to pursue their interests in the benefits of individuals' manifesto. Obama's policies on domestic affairs, politics, environment, economy and foreign affairs are completely different from Trump's administration. However, both leaders follow Machiavellian principles as noted in the books *The Prince* and *Discourses on Livy*. Each of their political leadership styles differs but is corresponding to what Machiavelli states in his two books. Thus, every leader must follow the Machiavellian guidelines in many of their actions.

My Findings

This project did not develop the way I had intended. Regardless, I was able to make several findings that were not what I had expected to find. Initially, expected to write a paper about why the American Politian follows Machiavelli despite the philosophy being known to be manipulative. I was really disappointed with the American people and their inability to see through their leaders deceptions. However, the more I read Machiavelli (I had not read him before the project), the more I found that Machiavelli's theories focused less on making moves strictly for one's benefit, but instead focused on making decisions that will be yield the best

results for the future. While I always knew Machiavelli's principles were effective I thought they were far more self-serving than they actually turned out being. So, while both presidents do use some of Machiavelli's principles neither of them is a perfect fit.

Now, if one disregards Machiavelli's theories and utilizes the Psychological definition of a Machiavellian, both presidents are a much better fit. This is disconcerting though because Machiavelli advocated lying only for the greater good. The psychological definitions insinuate a person who will lie for their own good. So, it appears as though Machiavelli has become a victim to a misreading of his work. This probably arose from people looking for a way to justify their pernicious actions and Machiavelli can do that. However, to just take that away does an injustice to the work as a whole.

As a lover of knowledge, I am glad I could clear up a misconception I myself had. This project also could be expanded upon in the future, as there are more questions I have. I would like to examine the history of leaders who have taken despotic action for the greater good. Next, I would like to examine the psychology behind people continuously voting for a position notorious for not being truthful. Finally, I would like to compile Machiavelli's insights into a more modern format, in the hopes of making Machiavelli a better-understood figure.

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