

Key points of The Prince

The Prince is an extended analysis of how to acquire and maintain political power. The opening dedication to Lorenzo de Medici declares Machiavelli's intention to discuss in plain language the conduct of great men and the principles of princely government. He does so in hope of pleasing and enlightening the Medici family.

The book's 26 chapters can be divided into four sections:

- 1) Chapters 1–11 discuss the different types of principalities or states
- 2) Chapters 12–14 discuss the different types of armies and the proper conduct of a prince as military leader,
- 3) Chapters 15–23 discuss the character and behavior of the prince,
- 4) Chapters 24–26 discuss Italy's desperate political situation. The final chapter is a plea for the Medici family to supply the prince who will lead Italy out of humiliation.

The four types of principalities

- 1) Hereditary principalities
- 2) Mixed principalities
- 3) New principalities
- 4) Ecclesiastical principalities

The four types of armies

A prince must always pay close attention to military affairs if he wants to remain in power.

There cannot be good laws where there is not a good army (*which would be a state's own troops*). (p.56) *What are good laws? can they be interpreted as promoting good order? Machiavelli does not go into this...*

- 1) Mercenaries
- 2) Auxiliaries
- 3) Native troops
- 4) Mixed troops,

The character and behavior of the prince

War only art for prince

Machiavelli recommends the following character and behavior for princes:

note: this is the most controversial part of his treatise

- a) It is better to be stingy than generous.
- b) It is better to be cruel than merciful.
- c) It is better to break promises if keeping them would be against one's interests.
- d) Princes must avoid making themselves hated and despised; the goodwill of the people is a better defense than any fortress.
- e) Princes should undertake great projects to enhance their reputation.
- f) Princes should choose wise advisors and avoid flatterers.

Machiavelli outlines and recommends:

The rulers of Italy have lost their states by ignoring the political and military principles Machiavelli enumerates.

Fortune controls half of human affairs, but free will controls the rest, leaving the prince free to act.

The final chapter is an exhortation to the Medici family to follow