

The End Justifies the Means: Machiavellian Management in Today's Society?



In today's society, we are witnessing Machiavellian management techniques in government and corporate structure. In "The Prince", Machiavelli states that the greatest moral good is a virtuous and stable state action to protect the country or company and they are therefore justified even if cruel. Machiavelli states that the main concern for a prince should be war or the preparation for the ultimate fight. Machiavelli advises that the prince must learn how to protect his territory and always advance upon others who were looking to take over his country. The prince is advised to study great military men so he may imitate their success and avoid their mistakes. A prince who is diligent in times of peace will be ready in times of adversity. Machiavelli writes, "Thus when fortune turns against them, you will be prepared to resist it." "A man who neglects what is actually done for what should be done moves toward self-destruction rather than self-preservation. If a prince wants to maintain his rule, he must be prepared to not be virtuous and to make use of this, not according to need." Machiavelli's writings supported the use of violence, betrayal, and deception—"The end justifies the means." In essence, the ruler or president must do whatever is necessary to ensure a positive outcome.

We note that the war in the Mideast has been an ongoing conflict for over 2,000 years, but just recently (after 9/11) we chose to go to war in Iraq and Afghanistan to ensure our foothold in the Middle East and preservation of our way of life. After the attack on our soil, President Bush, as well as other foreign leaders made use of the belief that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and he would use them against us. The end result is that we have had no terrorist attacks on our soil. Since we took the attack to the Mideast and we did this no matter what the cost, we inflicted fear and The terrorists were made to understand that the end justifies the means.

In our recent election, use of fear was manipulated in order to pass trillions of dollars in government funding which, under normal circumstances, would never have passed Congress. The government, under the guise of saving the country, has taken over banks, companies in the auto industry, and other finance companies. We've been made to believe that the end justifies the means.

Machiavelli notes that a prince is praised for keeping his word. However, he also notes that a prince is also praised for the illusion of being reliable and keeping his word. A prince therefore should only keep his word when it suits his purpose, but do his best to maintain the illusion that he does keep his word. Communication is the most important part of the game—symbolizing all the options available to diplomats, business owners, and corporate heads. Promises are made and broken, lies and deceptions are part of the endgame.

Throughout history, corporations like Enron and the like have abused consumer trust in order to make the almighty dollar. Madoff brazenly defrauded his investors out of \$50 billion dollars. New evidence is leading us to track other Ponzi schemes in our society. We have just recently mortgaged our country's future on the promises of our economic recovery. Our free market economy would have done a much better job to stave off the recession than government intervention.

Most recently, the government passed the budget and we were told by Obama that there would be no earmarks in any of his government dealings. Yet over 9,000 earmarks were allowed—a broken promise. Just this weekend, North Korea tested another missile, as well as a nuclear test—a breach of their commitment to us. We will condemn them and force sanctions upon them to no avail. It is clear, that the North Koreans and the Iranian government do not fear us or the possible repercussions of their actions. Without fear, we are giving away our ability to control rogue governments.

Machiavelli states that the prince must be feared and respected by his people, as well as his enemies. The priority of the person in power is to keep the security of the state, regardless of the morale in the means. "The prince must make himself feared, in such a way that he is not loved. At least he escapes being hated." Machiavelli believed that men were basically evil unless they were controlled. Even in times of peace they would eventually turn on their ruler, unless he had total control. In the arena of power, the end justifies the means. The security of the state is more important than the morality of the means. Machiavelli writes, "In the actions of men... when there is no court of appeal, one judges by the result."

Nobody likes a loser. You must do whatever it takes in order to ensure the safety and security of your company and your country. From the robber barons of old to the manipulation of the market, corporate heads are doing whatever is necessary to ensure their company will make it through this recession. Prior to this recession, most companies were operating with luxury and minimal cost controls. Now every company is fighting for every dollar and cutting costs. If we had better budget controls and planning, and less luxurious living, we would have been prepared for this recession and the devastation that it has brought. In the words of Machiavelli, "By making provision in advance, princes may easily avoid such difficulties, but if they wait until they are near at hand, the medicine will not be in time, for by then the malady will have grown incurable." Executives know that the best way to self preservation is through power—by manipulating people's passions. The company's system of appealing to the customer's trust and loyalty—in turn earning their money—puts the executive prince at the head of the corporate kingdom.

Machiavelli was a man who believed in action. Boldness is to be encouraged. Supporters should be promoted and those who remain neutral in tough situations should be viewed as weak and distrusted enemies, for they will turn on you at their earliest moment. Machiavellian management dealt with the notion that we should use a clearly stated vision of reality. He believed in truth, loyalty, stakeholders, and the use of the "spin doctor" to manipulate the truth to get things done. We see Machiavellian management techniques in all forms of our society from the manipulation of the news to the exploitation of the marketplace in corporations and government. From Stalin to Chavez, from Henry Ford to Bill Gates our government and corporate leaders have used his techniques to promote their ideas and get the job done. He is among us and his methods are very much a part of our society—because, at times, "The end justifies the means."