Nicolo Machiavelli’s *The Prince* Excerpts:

**XIV: THAT WHICH CONCERNS A PRINCE ON THE ART OF WAR**

A prince ought to have no other study than war; for this is the art of all rulers; it upholds born princes and enables others to become princes. Without its knowledge, many have lost their states.

Francesco Sforza became Duke of Milan through military skill. But to rise through war is not all, lack of military skill brings, among other evils, the abhorrence of all around you. Because, the armed and unarmed have disdain and suspicion against each other, they can never work well together. Therefore a prince who does not understand the art of war cannot be respected by his soldiers, nor can he rely on them.

He ought above all things to keep his men well organised and drilled, to pursue hunting, by which he learns to endure hardships, and gets to know the nature and lie of the mountains, the plains, the rivers and marshes- knowledge essential to success.

Philopoemen of the Achaeans, is commended because in time of peace he forever asked of those he met: "If the enemy were on that hill, how should we best advance against them?" "How might we retreat?" So there was never any surprise he could not deal with.

To exercise the intellect the prince should read history, and study there the actions of leaders, to examine the causes of their victories and defeat, just as Alexander the Great imitated Achilles, and Caesar, Alexander. And whoever reads Xenophon's Life of Cyrus, will recognise his glory. A wise prince ought never to stand idle, but increase his resources with industry so that they may be available to him in adversity.

**XV: OF THINGS FOR WHICH MEN, AND ESPECIALLY PRINCES, ARE PRAISED OR BLAMED**

It remains now to see how a prince should treat his subjects and friends. Here I wish to give the real truth of the matter, not the fantasy of it, for a man who acts for good is likely to be ruined. It is necessary for a prince wishing to hold his own to know how to do wrong, and to make use of it when necessary.

Men may say that a prince is liberal or miserly, generous or rapacious, cruel or compassionate, faithless or faithful, cowardly or brave, affable or haughty, lascivious or chaste, sincere or cunning, grave or frivolous, religious or unbelieving, and the like. It would be praiseworthy if a prince exhibited all the good characters, but humanity being frail, it is sufficient that he be not reproached for the bad ones.

**XVI: OF LIBERALITY AND MEANNESS**

It is well that a prince be reputed liberal. Nevertheless, liberality exercised in secret brings no reputation. Therefore, any prince wishing to be thought liberal must do so with magnificence. But such requires money, the taxes for which will soon offend his subjects.

Therefore, a prince ought not to fear being thought mean, for in time it will enhance his reputation as he can defend all attacks without burdening his people. It is one of those vices which will enable him to govern.

And if any should say: Caesar, and others, obtained empire by liberality, I answer; liberality is useful in becoming a prince, but worthless once in power. And if any one should reply: liberal princes have done great things with armies; I reply; an army must believe their prince liberal, otherwise that would not follow him.

A prince should guard, above all, against being despised and hated; and liberality leads to both. Therefore it is wiser to be reputed mean which brings reproach without hatred.

**XVII: OF CRUELTY AND CLEMENCY, AND WHETHER IT IS BETTER TO BE LOVED THAN FEARED**

Every prince may desire to be thought clement. But it was Cesare Borgia's cruelty which brought peace and unity to the Romagna. A prince who keeps his subjects united and loyal, ought not to mind the reproach of cruelty; for too much mercy will allow disorder to injure the whole people, whilst a few executions offend only individuals.

Is it better to be loved or feared? One might wish to be both, but they are not met in the same person. Because this is to be asserted in general of men, that they are ungrateful, fickle, false, cowardly, covetous, and as long as you succeed they are yours entirely. They will offer you their blood, property, life, and children when the need is far distant; but when it approaches they turn against you. The prince who relies on their promises is ruined; because friendships that are obtained by payments, and not by greatness or nobility of mind, may indeed be earned, but they are not secured, and in time of need cannot be relied upon. Men will readily offend a beloved, for love is preserved by the link of obligation which men will break at every opportunity for their advantage; but fear preserves you by a dread of punishment which never fails.

Nevertheless a prince ought to inspire fear in such a way that, if he does not win love, he avoids hatred. Which will always be as long as he abstains from the property and women of his subjects. But when it is necessary for him to proceed against the life of someone, he must do so with proper justification, but above all things he must keep his hands off the property of others, because men will quickly forget their father's death, but not the loss of their inheritance. But when a prince is with his army then it is necessary for him to disregard the reputation of cruelty, for without it he would never hold his army united.

How was it that Hannibal held together an enormous army composed of many various races of men? It was only his inhuman cruelty. Shortsighted are the writers who admire his deeds, and then condemn the principal cause of them.

I must conclude that, men love by their own will, but fear is from the will of their prince. A wise prince should always establish himself on that which is in his own control, only endeavouring to avoid hatred.

**XXII: OF THE SECRETARIES OF PRINCES**

The first opinion which one forms of a prince is by observing the men he has around him; and foolish servants show the foolishness of their prince in choosing them.

Anyone who met Antonio da Venafro, servant of Pandolfo of Siena, would know the prince to be very clever in having such a servant. Intellects do comprehend in three ways; some by themselves, some by the wit of others and some not at all. If Pandolfo was not in the first rank, he was in the second, for judgement to recognise the good and bad in his servant allows him to praise one and correct the other; thus the servant cannot hope to deceive, and is kept honest.

No man who seeks his own profit will make a good servant. To keep his servant honest the prince ought to study him, honouring him, enriching him, doing him kindnesses; and at the same time let him see that he cannot stand alone. When servants and princes do not trust each other, disaster will come to either one or the other.

**XXIII: HOW FLATTERERS SHOULD BE AVOIDED**

Flatterers, of whom courts are full, are a terrible pest and a terrible danger. One can guard against them only by letting men know that the truth does not offend you; but when every one may tell you the truth, respect is lost.

Therefore, a wise prince ought to seek the honest council of only a few wise men, and afterwards form his own conclusions. Outside of these, he should listen to no one, and be steadfast in his resolutions. He who does otherwise is either overthrown by flatterers, or is so often changed in opinions that he falls into contempt, as has Maximilian {13}.

A prince, therefore, ought to be a constant inquirer, and a patient listener, and should let his anger fall on those who have not told him the truth. Counsellors each have their own interests, and, like all men, will always prove untrue unless they are restrained.