



# MACHIAVELLI POWER

*José Nivaldo Jr.*

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Due to a marketing mistake, Machiavelli has become identified as a theoretician of the policy of attaining power at any cost, the expert on the cynical and opportunistic ways by which princes should behave to retain power at any price. In fact, Machiavelli was an intellectual and a politician in an age of transition. As José Nivaldo Júnior puts it: “All this grandiloquent scenario (the Florence where he lived) can be summarised in one word: ‘transition’.”

In a feudal age still controlled by the cynical theocracy of corrupt popes and cardinals and of princes isolated from the masses, Machiavelli’s “opportunism” meant that the ruler should listen to the people and strictly meet his commitments. That was a proposal for a democracy that had not yet come into existence. It sounded cynical as it was seen as having no commitment to the principles of the aristocracy and the Church.

The world was emerging from scholasticism, the dogmas and the predominance of a systematized morality serving the power of princes and cardinals. It was entering a period of science, reality and the laws of economics.

The world’s evolution in the centuries to come was to show that the Florentine intellectual was right. But his name has been remembered as an adviser to princes who used his words to manipulate the masses.

A serious democracy demands a prince such as the one envisaged by Machiavelli, though different from the princes that the holders of power actually turned into.

Machiavelli’s prince was not a prince without ethics. His was the new ethics of commitment to the people. What happened was that the princes took their advisers’ suggestions, no longer kept their distance from the people, and freed themselves from dogmatism, but instead of adopting a new ethics and getting closer to the people’s desires, they kept the same interests, making changes that were only apparent. This is the reason why Machiavelli has become identified with the idea. As the cynical theoretician of power, to be used for manipulating peoples’ illusions, but sticking to the same expropriating ends that the powerful would continue to use.

Five hundred years after *The Prince*, the world is now going through a new period of transition. The end of the twentieth century and of the second millennium once again shows a “grandiloquent scenario that could be summarised in one word: ‘transition’.”

That is where José Nivaldo Júnior’s book fits in.

Political marketing is the theme which Machiavelli himself would be working on if he were to write today a new book entitled *The President*.

The idea of marketing would certainly be seen by Machiavelli as the way for the Prince to gain knowledge of public opinion among the mega-populations that have replaced the districts of Florence, and to adapt his policies accordingly. Using the technique of public opinion surveys, data processing equipment and efficient methods to formulate statistically relevant questions and tests, Machiavelli would say that it had never been so easy for a “president” to know the opinion of the people he rules and thus to get closer to them.

Once again, the ideas of the intellectual can be manipulated by the powerful. More seriously still, these ideas might consist of no more than the techniques of public opinion researchers who would take over their due and limited role: to sell the image of a prince who changes nothing as if he himself represented the new. Instead of a new vision, such as Machiavelli had when he imagined the future, marketing would be used to avoid change, through manipulation and lies to deceive with a false convergence with the people.

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