Niccolò Machiavelli quotes

1. "I'm not interested in preserving the status quo; I want to overthrow it."

2. "Everyone sees what you appear to be, few experience what you really are."

3. "If an injury has to be done to a man it should be so severe that his vengeance need not be feared."

4. "it is much safer to be feared than loved because ...love is preserved by the link of obligation which, owing to the baseness of men, is broken at every opportunity for their advantage; but fear preserves you by a dread of punishment which never fails."

5. "Never was anything great achieved without danger."

6. "There is no other way to guard yourself against flattery than by making men understand that telling you the truth will not offend you."

7. "Men are so simple of mind, and so much dominated by their immediate needs, that a deceitful man will always find plenty who are ready to be deceived."

8. "...he who seeks to deceive will always find someone who will allow himself to be deceived."

9. "Whosoever desires constant success must change his conduct with the times."

10. "All courses of action are risky, so prudence is not in avoiding danger (it's impossible), but calculating risk and acting decisively. Make mistakes of ambition and not mistakes of sloth. Develop the strength to do bold things, not the strength to suffer."

11. "the ends justifies the means"

12. "Where the willingness is great, the difficulties cannot be great."

13. "Men are driven by two principal impulses, either by love or by fear."

14. "Since love and fear can hardly exist together, if we must choose between them, it is far safer to be feared than loved"

15. "How we live is so different from how we ought to live that he who studies what ought to be done rather than what is done will learn the way to his downfall rather than to his preservation."
16. "The lion cannot protect himself from traps, and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves. One must therefore be a fox to recognize traps, and a lion to frighten wolves."

17. "It must be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage than a new system. For the initiator has the enmity of all who would profit by the preservation of the old institution and merely lukewarm defenders in those who gain by the new ones."

18. "It is not titles that honour men, but men that honour titles."

19. "Men in general judge more by the sense of sight than by the sense of touch, because everyone can see but few can test by feeling. Everyone sees what you seem to be, few know what you really are; and those few do not dare take a stand against the general opinion."

20. "Appear as you may wish to be"

21. "A man who is used to acting in one way never changes; he must come to ruin when the times, in changing, no longer are in harmony with his ways."

22. "When evening comes, I return home and go into my study. On the threshold I strip off my muddy, sweaty, workday clothes, and put on the robes of court and palace, and in this graver dress I enter the antique courts of the ancients and am welcomed by them, and there I taste the food that alone is mine, and for which I was born. And there I make bold to speak to them and ask the motives of their actions, and they, in their humanity, reply to me. And for the space of four hours I forget the world, remember no vexation, fear poverty no more, tremble no more at death: I pass indeed into their world."

23. "A prudent man should always follow in the path trodden by great men and imitate those who are most excellent, so that if he does not attain to their greatness, at any rate he will get some tinge of it."

24. "There are three classes of intellects: one which comprehends by itself; another which appreciates what others comprehend; and a third which neither comprehends by itself nor by the showing of others; the first is the most excellent, the second is good, and the third is useless."

25. "There is nothing more important than appearing to be religious."

26. "It is best to be both feared and loved; however, if one cannot be both it is better to be feared than loved."

27. "People should either be caressed or crushed. If you do them minor damage they will get their revenge; but if you cripple them there is nothing they can do. If you need to injure
someone, do it in such a way that you do not have to fear their vengeance."

28. "My view is that it is desirable to be both loved and feared; but it is difficult to achieve both and, if one of them has to be lacking, it is much safer to be feared than loved."

29. "History is written by the victors."

30. "Therefore, it is necessary to be a fox to discover the snares and a lion to terrify the wolves"

31. "Men never do good unless necessity drives them to it; but when they are free to choose and can do just as they please, confusion and disorder become rampant."

32. "Men ought either to be well treated or crushed, because they can avenge themselves of lighter injuries, of 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."

33. "There is no avoiding war, it can only be postponed to the advantage of your enemy."

34. "Men judge generally more by the eye than by the hand, for everyone can see and few can feel. Every one sees what you appear to be, few really know what you are."

35. "And it ought to be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things."

36. "The vulgar crowd always is taken by appearances, and the world consists chiefly of the vulgar."

37. "And truly it is a very natural and ordinary thing to desire to acquire, and always, when men do it who can, they will be praised or not blamed; but when they cannot, and wish to do it anyway, here lies the error and the blame."

38. "It is better to be feared than loved, if you cannot be both."

39. "The end justifies the means."

40. "It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things."

41. "Men in general judge more from appearances than from reality. All men have eyes, but few have the gift of penetration."

42 "When evening comes, I return home and enter my study; on the threshold I take off my workday clothes, covered with mud and dirt, and put on the garments of court and palace.
Fitted out appropriately, I step inside the venerable courts of the ancients, where, solicitously received by them, I nourish myself on that food that alone is mine and for which I was born; where I am unashamed to converse with them and to question them about the motives for their actions, and they, out of their human kindness, answer me. And for four hours at a time I feel no boredom, I forget all my troubles, I do not dread poverty, and I am not terrified by death. I absorb myself into them completely."

43. "From this arises the question whether it is better to be loved rather than feared, or feared rather than loved. It might perhaps be answered that we should wish to be both: but since love and fear can hardly exist together, if we must choose between them, it is far safer to be feared than loved". "

44. "God creates men, but they choose each other."

45. "He who becomes a Prince through the favour of the people should always keep on good terms with them; which it is easy for him to do, since all they ask is not to be oppressed"

46. "Therefore it is unnecessary for a prince to have all the good qualities I have enumerated, but it is very necessary to appear to have them. And I shall dare to say this also, that to have them and always to observe them is injurious, and that to appear to have them is useful; to appear merciful, faithful, humane, religious, upright, and to be so, but with a mind so framed that should you require not to be so, you may be able and know how to change to the opposite."

47. "But confining myself more to the particular, I say that a prince may be seen happy to-day and ruined to-morrow without having shown any change of disposition or character. This, I believe, arises firstly from causes that have already been discussed at length, namely, that the prince who relies entirely upon fortune is lost when it changes. I believe also that he will be successful who directs his actions according to the spirit of the times, and that he whose actions do not accord with the times will not be successful. Because men are seen, in affairs that lead to the end which every man has before him, namely, glory and riches, to get there by various methods; one with caution, another with haste; one by force, another by skill; one by patience, another by its opposite; and each one succeeds in reaching the goal by a different method. One can also see of two cautious men the one attain his end, the other fail; and similarly, two men by different observances are equally successful, the one being cautious, the other impetuous; all this arises from nothing else than whether or not they conform in their methods to the spirit of the times. This follows from what I have said, that two men working differently bring about the same effect, and of two working similarly, one attains his object and the other does not."

48. It's better to be feared than loved if you cannot be both."

49. "And as the observance of religious teaching is the cause of the greatness of republics, similarly, disdain for it is the cause of their ruin. For where the fear of God is lacking, the state
must necessarily either come to ruin or be held together by the fear of a prince that will compensate for the lack of religion."

50. "For one change always leaves a dovetail into which another will fit."

51. "as the physicians say it happens in hectic fever, that in the beginning of the malady it is easy to cure but difficult to detect, but in the course of time, not having been either detected or treated in the beginning, it becomes easy to detect but difficult to cure"

52. "From this arises the following question: whether it is better to be loved than feared, or the reverse. The answer is that one would like to be both the one and the other, but because they are difficult to combine, it is far better to be loved than feared if you cannot be both."

53. "Though fraud in all other actions be odious, yet in matters of war it is laudable and glorious, and he who overcomes his enemies by stratagem is as much to be praised as he who overcomes them by force."

54. "But in Republics there is a stronger vitality, a fiercer hatred, a keener thirst for revenge. The memory of their former freedom will not let them rest; so that the safest course is either to destroy them, or to go and live in them."

55. "For that reason, let a prince have the credit of conquering and holding his state, the means will always be considered honest, and he will be praised by everybody because the vulgar are always taken by what a thing seems to be and by what comes of it; and in the world there are only the vulgar, for the few find a place there only when the many have no ground to rest on."

56. "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, because fortune is a woman, and if you wish to keep her under it is necessary to beat and ill-use her; and it is seen that she allows herself to be mastered by the adventurous rather than by those who go to work more coldly. She is, therefore, always, woman-like, a lover of young men, because they are less cautious, more violent, and with more audacity command her."

57. "There are many who think a wise prince ought, when he has the chance, to foment astutely some enmity, so that by suppressing it he will augment his greatness."

58. "For, besides what has been said, it should be borne in mind that the temper of the multitude is fickle, and that while it is easy to persuade them of a thing, it is hard to fix them in that persuasion"

59 "Is it better to be loved or feared?"
60. "Considering thus how much honor is awarded to antiquity, and how many times—letting pass infinite other examples—a fragment of an ancient statue has been bought at high price because someone wants to have it near oneself, to honor his house with it, and to be able to have it imitated by those who delight in that art, and how the latter then strive with all industry to represent it in all their works; and seeing, on the other hand, that the most virtuous works the histories show us, which have been done by ancient kingdoms and republics, by kings, captains, citizens, legislators, and others who have labored for their fatherland, are rather admired than imitated—indeed they are so much shunned by everyone in every least thing that no sign of that ancient virtue remains with us—I can do no other than marvel and grieve... From this it arises that the infinite number who read [the histories] take pleasure in hearing of the variety of accidents contained within them without thinking of imitating them, judging that imitation is not only difficult but impossible—as if heaven, sun, elements, men had varied in motion, order, and power from what they were in antiquity. Wishing, therefore, to turn men from this error, I have judged it necessary to write on all those books of Titus Livy..."

61. "It ought to be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things. Because the innovator has for enemies all those who have done well under the old conditions, and lukewarm defenders in those who may do well under the new. This coolness arises partly from fear of the opponents, who have the laws on their side, and partly from the incredulity of men, who do not readily believe in new things until they have had a long experience of them."

62. "Because fear and love can hardly co-exist together, if we must choose between them, it is far safer to be feared than loved."

63. "The new ruler must determine all the injuries that he will need to inflict. He must inflict them once and for all."

64. "A prince ought to have two fears one from within on account of his subjects the other from without on account of external powers. From the latter he is defended by being well armed and having good allies and if he is well armed he will have good friends and affairs will always remain quiet within when they are quiet without unless they should have been already disturbed by conspiracy and even should affairs outside be disturbed if he has carried out his preparations and has lived as I have said as long as he does not despair he will resist every attack."

65. "The promise given was a necessity of the past: the word broken is a necessity of the present."

66. "The main foundations of every state new states as well as ancient or composite ones are good laws and good arms you cannot have good laws without good arms and where there are good arms good laws inevitably follow."
67. "When evening has come, I return to my house and go into my study. At the door I take off my clothes of the day, covered with mud and mire, and I put on my regal and courtly garments; and decently reclothed, I enter the ancient courts of ancient men, where, received by them lovingly, I feed on the food that alone is mine and that I was born for. There I am not ashamed to speak with them and to ask them the reason for their actions; and they in their humanity reply to me. And for the space of four hours I feel no boredom, I forget every pain, I do not fear poverty, death does not frighten me. I deliver myself entirely to them."

68. "And although one should not reason about Moses, as he was a mere executor of things that had been ordered for him by God, nonetheless he should be admired if only for that grace which made him deserving of speaking with God."

69. "Set down among these lice, this is how I keep the mold from my brain and find release from Fortune’s malice. I am content to have her beat me down this way to see if she won’t become ashamed."

70. "When a newly acquired State has been accustomed, as I have said, to live under its own laws and in freedom, there are three methods whereby it may be held. The first is to destroy it; the second, to go and reside there in person; the third, to suffer it to live on under its own laws, subjecting it to a tribute, and entrusting its government to a few of the inhabitants who will keep the rest your friends."

71. "For this reason a prince ought to take care that he never lets anything slip from his lips that is not replete with the above-named five qualities, that he may appear to him who sees and hears him altogether merciful, faithful, humane, upright, and religious. There is nothing more necessary to appear to have than this last quality, inasmuch as men judge generally more by the eye than by the hand, because it belongs to everybody to see you, to few to come in touch with you. 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, who have the majesty of the state to defend them; and in the actions of all men, and especially of princes, which it is not prudent to challenge, one judges by the result."

72. "Thus it is well to seem merciful faithful humane religious and upright and also to be so but the mind should remain so balanced that were it needful not to be so you should be able and know how to change to the contrary."