

Texts from the Void: Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Lenin's *What is to be Done?*

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Abstract

What connects the two texts separated from each other by nearly four hundred years – Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1513) and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's *What is to be Done?* (1902) The first is a compendium of formulations on what a Prince ought to be, the pitfalls on the path of his success, how to rule, how the Prince should relate to his subjects, and what is necessary to mobilize the people to the unity and glory of a principedom. The second written in the Russian revolutionary age discusses how to build a revolutionary party, how to unite an ideology and a class and how a political party can become a tribune of the people. The contexts are different, situations vastly dissimilar. Yet, there is a strange connection between the two. Both carry the enigmatic quality of being timeless while being entirely focused on the problems of the time. Both resonate with concerns that share similar grounds. Both evoke themes that play upon the great question of contingency and uncertainty. They seem to carry no lineage. As if, they came out of void.

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**** There is a provision to attend the lecture online for outstation participants. The **Zoom Registration link** to the lecture is given below.**

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