



Reinterpreting Machiavelli's Political Philosophy: Contemporary Applications and Ethical Implications

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Abstract

We live in a world that is always changing, with kingdoms rising and falling and with leaders coming and going. They rant, "For the people, for the people," right before they show themselves to be brutal autocrats hungry for power. Power struggles are not a recent phenomenon; rather, they have a long history. Since not everyone is born with the same social and tactical abilities, anyone cannot succeed as an authoritarian king. All philosophers and intellectuals, from Greek philosophy to the Renaissance, addressed the end of the state. They believed that the state's political influence would be utilized for other purposes. All political theorists from Plato, Aristotle, to the Middle Ages (up until the 16th century) had been preoccupied with the fundamental issue of the purpose of the state and had viewed the use of state power as a means to a more important, morally motivated aim. However, Machiavelli had a quite different stance. For him, the end of the state is its ability to exercise power. Meaning that each state must strive to increase its authority. This business will be in a significant deal of trouble if the state fails. As a result, he focused only on strategies that would enable him to gain, hold onto and grow his power. Knowing and comprehending how a person came to have power may be a crucial component of being able to comprehend why they are unable to hold onto and use that power. Growing older presents more opponents because of the foes you make as you become older. It is also conceivable that the issue has generated public disapproval before he or she even assumed office, which would presumably place this individual at a distinct disadvantage when weighing the advantages and drawbacks of retaining power. This research paper highlights all the possible principles of Machiavelli.

Keywords : Machiavelli, Power, Republic, Renaissance, History, Greek, State, Diplomatic, Europe, Laws

I. INTRODUCTION

Niccolo Machiavelli was born in 1469 to a poor family in Florence, Italy. His father worked as a judge. The Latin classics, particularly those on Roman history, were studied by Machiavelli under the tutelage of his father because he was unable to acquire a decent education as a young boy. He became the secretary of Chancery while he was young and joined the Florence administration. He held a top position in the Florentine Republic for many years, handling both diplomatic and military issues. He composed poetry, plays and music for carnivals. For historians and experts on Italian communication, his private correspondence is equally significant. He undertook multiple diplomatic journeys in the first ten years of the sixteenth century, chiefly to the Papacy in Rome. Florence dispatched him to Pistoia to appease the leaders of two warring groups that had erupted into riots in 1501 and 1502, but when this failed, Machiavelli had always supported the idea of expelling the leaders from the city. He saw firsthand in 1502 and 1503 the grim realities of the state-building strategies used by Cesare Borgia (1475–1507) and his father, Pope Alexander VI, who were at the time attempting to seize control of a sizable portion of Central Italy. He distrusted mercenaries (which he justified in his official reports and later in his theoretical works because they lack patriotism and are uninvolved in the war, which makes their allegiance erratic and frequently unreliable when it is most needed), so he staffed his army with citizens instead—a move that proved to be time and time again successful. By February 1506, he was able to organise the procession of 400 farmers who were dressed in armour (including iron breastplates) and equipped with lances and small guns. He led Florentine citizen-soldiers in their victory over Pisa in 1509. As he shared their disbelief in the goodness of people and human nature, Machiavelli's concept of human nature was the same as that of John Calvin and Thomas Hobbes. Machiavelli claimed that the person was evil, self-centered and egoistic. He lacked underlying strength, was unappreciative, conceited, artificial, fearful of danger and was very greedy. He was prepared to act in a way that was harmful to the community because he lacked justice and honesty. only when forced to do so or when an individual was prepared to conduct good deeds because there was personal gain.

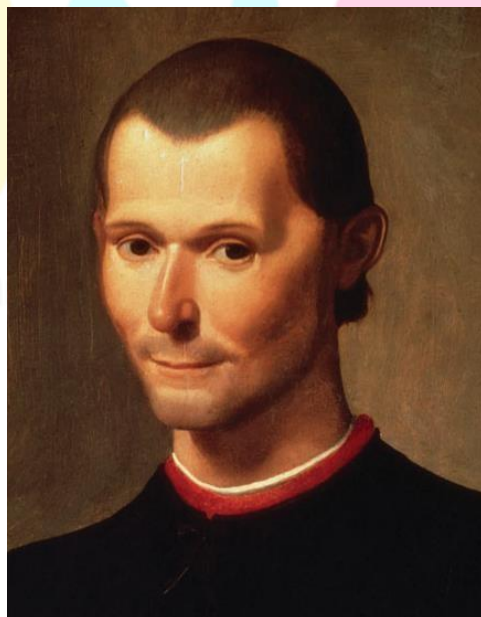


Fig. 1 Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527)

The ultimate level of human relationship is the state. It is indispensable for the improvement of human welfare.

Even sacrificing the person for the sake of the state is worshipping the state. A ruler must keep in mind that success is a result of power. He is free to employ any strategy to gain political power. Political statesmen play a crucial role in managing the state and ensuring its security. Therefore, the Prince's central topic is the process of attaining power. Machiavelli and his work "The Prince" are essential to understanding modern power dynamics. Machiavelli's most well-known works are "The Discourses" and "The Art of War." Body politics are analysed in it. A guide on "State craft" and "the Art of governing" may be found in "The Prince." So it is stated that "The Prince" is a book on the art of leadership rather than a study of political science. It is written as advise and is directed at any monarch. The Prince is frequently cited as one of the founding texts of modern philosophy, particularly contemporary political philosophy, which emphasises the need of "effective" truth above abstract ideals. Another noteworthy aspect of it is that it directly opposes the prevalent Catholic and scholastic ideas of the day, particularly those that dealt with politics and ethics.



Fig. 2 Title page of a 1550 edition

WHY MACHIAVELLI ALIGNED WITH A STRONG STATE ?

- He gained first-hand knowledge of the politics of the day. A wealthy family welcomed him into the world in Florence, Italy in 1469, the year Prince Medici was at the height of his influence. He started working for the government at the age of 25 as a clerk chancery. He was appointed as an ambassador fairly quickly after that and he later rose to the position of king's secretary. He gained actual political experience in this way. His political opinions were influenced by his administrative and political experience.
- The new spirit of the Renaissance had a significant impact on Machiavelli, who lived in Renaissance Italy. Every aspect of human existence was given a logical scientific perspective by the intellectual awakening, which also replaced faith with reason. Italy was the most contemporary and urbanised nation in all of Europe throughout the Renaissance. However, moral decay and political anarchy coexisted in Italy with its wealth, intelligence and creative triumphs. The widespread corruption and avarice of the Italian monarchs and church officials was the worst feature of Machiavelli's day. The civilization that was going through a serious political

crisis is represented by Machiavelli. There were many little, separate nations that made up Italy. Some of these nations, such as Florence and Venice, were democracies, while others were governed by despots. These nations engaged in a never-ending conflict with one another on the outside while harboring deep political rivalries and personal ambitions within. Italy was weak and a target for the aspirations of the strong neighboring powers of France, Prussia and Spain as a result of its political split and internal conflict. The Medici emperors were overthrown by France when it conquered Italy. This tragic event was observed by Machiavelli. This painful event led Machiavelli to the conclusion that unless Italy was unified under a powerful central authority, the nation would constantly be in danger of invasion and annexation by surrounding nations.

- Solutions for Italy's problems are suggested Machiavelli was a great patriot who thought about Italy's suffering and tried to find solutions. He proposed a powerful and dishonest prince for Italy. He did not advocate the republican system of governance for Italy since it assumes moral, upright and patriotic citizenry, yet the Italians of the sixteenth century were dishonest and self-centered. Machiavelli therefore proposed that Italy have a strong and capable king.
- Idealistic state conceptions were not anything Machiavelli was interested in. His main focus was on the coherence of the political system and of power. He used a scientific approach. He conducted thorough research on the mediaeval era, which spanned the fourth and fifteenth centuries. The Feudal state was prevalent at this time. This is how the monarch split his realms into many sections. Each piece was given to a major tenant or noble. Common laws and a centralized government did not exist. The feudal system, in short, was confusing. Church arose from this uncertainty as the supreme authority. The result was ongoing tension between the temporal and spiritual rulers. Pope asserted that he was superior to all the rulers. The state (civil power) was little more than the church's security force. Because of this, a real national life could not develop under such a system. He scanned the whole Italian social structure. The state's identity and significance were undermined by feudalism and the church and the state was also viewed as inferior as a result. Machiavelli, however, totally separated politics from religion. The mediaeval custom that the church controls political authority was broken by him. By asserting that the state has its own set of moral guidelines to follow and that it is the highest, ultimate and autonomous institution, he completely separated the state from the church. He asserted that the state is superior to all human social associations. He advocated an all-powerful central government that rules supreme over all institutions in place of the feudal system.
- Power is the overarching concept of Machiavelli's political theories. He emphasized that politics need power as a necessary component. He contends that the church's moral code for individuals cannot serve as the ruler's rules. Machiavelli argues that a ruler must keep in mind that success is a result of power. He can employ any method to gain political power. He claimed that politics is a never-ending power battle. All politics is power politics.
- The end goal for Machiavelli was an absolute state and power was the means to that end. He claimed that The Prince's sole objective was to fortify and unite the nation, impose peace and order and drive out the foreign invader. Any method would work to accomplish this goal.

II. SUGGESTIONS TO THE PRINCE REGARDING STATECRAFT

As a result of the aforementioned factors, Machiavelli's "The Prince" takes the form of advice given to a ruler on the art of the state. The following are some key elements of the advice to the ruler:

1. The Machiavelli elaborates the doctrine of 'Raison D 'Etat'

- "Reason of state" is what it implies. It involves initiatives and regulations aimed at enhancing state safety and security. because the wellbeing of the people must come before the state's own preservation. Machiavelli justifies any measure the state does to protect and preserve itself. According to him, the hard realities of political life, which include a battle for power and survival, serve as one's guidance in politics. Only the "Raison D'État" may be used to evaluate the activities of the state. i.e., a state that is autonomous, self-sufficient, well-organized and well-maintained. Machiavelli counselled the prince that any measures used by the state to maintain and protect this kind of state are appropriate. Power should be the prince's top priority. The domains of morality and ethics are distinct. It can't be mixed in with the state's logic. A prince places the utmost value on state power.

2. The Goal Outweighs The Means.

- The Machiavelli made a very well-known claim that he supported with the "Reason of State." He believed that the highest level of human relationship is the state. Even when an individual is sacrificed, the state is to be venerated as a deity. A monarch must keep in mind that anything that leads to success and power is noble, even cunningness and dishonesty. Politics is the riskiest game there is. It can never be performed in a polite and organised way. The preservation of life, upholding law and order and ensuring the wellbeing of its citizens are some of the state's core goals and duties. Therefore, the state has to have sufficient resources available.

3. State is sovereign, autonomus and non-religious.

- According to Machiavelli, the state is superior to other social organisations in human civilization. It is independent and sovereign. The prince cannot be constrained by moral or religious principles. He is outside of morality and above it. He may achieve his goals by utilising religion. Politics cannot be influenced by religion and the church cannot rule the government. In actuality, a sovereign state has complete authority over all people and organisations. Of all institutions, the state is the most essential. It is evaluated using entirely different criteria since it is on a whole different basis. Religion serves both the means and the instrument of state authority. The state was established to serve the people's tangible interests, hence nothing unearthly exists there. He separated government from religion and politics from theology. He placed priority on a man's earthly existence rather than the state's moral aim and purpose. He claimed that politics is a separate endeavour with distinct rules and laws.

4. A prince needs to possess both the traits of a lion and a fox.

- The prince should emulate the traits of a fox and a lion, according to Machiavelli. He will be able to see his

goal and the means to get there by adopting the fox's cunning and foresight. He will have the required power and force to accomplish that aim thanks to his mimicry of the lion. A fox may be cunning and foresighted, but without the required force of a lion, he is helpless. Similar to how a lion would behave recklessly without the cunning and wisdom of a fox. Therefore, a monarch who wishes to be extremely successful must possess traits from both the lion and the fox. When there is chaos and indiscipline, physical force is required, thus he must have the boldness of a lion and the cunning of a fox. However, morality and the rule of law are necessary to curb human selfishness and foster civic virtues.

5. Make use of a double standard in politics.

- One is for the monarch and the other is for his people. He said that a ruler need not be moral. Because he created morality and law, his price is more than theirs. The primary responsibility of a ruler is to uphold the state. He may employ deception, conspiracies, assassinations, massacres, etc. to achieve this. Because it is not feasible nor desirable to have an absolute moral code in politics. Morality, he said, is crucial for humans. Only moral citizens voluntarily obey the law and give their life in defence of their country. It fosters civic responsibility and national pride. Machiavelli advises a double standard of morality as a result.

6. The ruler must take into account the base and unappreciative character of men.

- Machiavelli examined human activities with particular attention and described human nature, contending that a reasonable explanation of politics must start with a description of human nature. He believed that all men are terrible and that all men are a combination of weakness, decency, fear and the drive for power. One of the most notable characteristics of human nature are:
 - Human wants have no bounds. He is violent and egotistical. As a result, there is conflict and rivalry.
 - Security is a concern for the general public. They cooperate with the state and follow the rules because they understand that only the state's laws can provide security. Therefore, a monarch who wishes to succeed must guarantee that people are safe and protected.
 - Because violence incites fear, people must be restrained by physical restraint. The bad instincts in man can only be kept under control via force and repression. Because of this, force rather than persuasion should be used in administration.
 - Everyone is ambitious by nature and this trait causes people to feel unfulfilled. There is no such thing as a satisfied human being. Always seeking to rule, he. As a result of this ambition, there occur conflicts and wars.

7. Preferred tyrannical leader.

- Machiavelli opposed the republican form of government because it requires moral, upstanding and patriotic citizens. In addition, he counselled the prince to change his monarchy into a republic. if his descendants act corruptly and abuse their position of authority. The basis of government, in Machiavelli's view, is what gives states their legitimacy because God did not establish them to punish people for their sins. According to Machiavelli, men's frailty and inadequacy are the foundation of governance. Normal administration is not conceivable at all if men live in a society that is corrupt and greedy and where the law has no power. In order

to restore order to society, there must be a greater power. The government, which has total authority, curbs people's overwhelming demands and keeps them under control.

8. Preserve a powerful military.

- He advocated ongoing military readiness in order to protect the state. To counter any danger to his authority from both within and beyond, the prince should gather a powerful army. For a state to be able to defend itself, a strong, regular army was required. The state makes an effort to create a reliable, autonomous and independent army. Such an army should be made up of its own people and be equipped to protect its boundaries as well as expand them.

9. Ordered state.

- In "The Prince," Machiavelli promoted absolute rule and a strong state. He had seen the disorder, lawlessness, corruption and misgovernment that occurred in Italy during his period, which is why he advocated for absolutism. He had seen how Florence had been taken by French monarch Charles VIII without any fight. Therefore, Machiavelli was in favour of a well-run, lawful and powerfully armed government. Any nation's chances of surviving in world politics were bleak without a powerful state. He held that only an orderly state could protect against forces of both internal chaos and external aggression.

10. Prince must be emotionless.

- According to Machiavelli, a prince must be dispassionate, which implies that effective leadership necessitates some emotional distance. Rather, the prince should use reason, cunning and poise in his decision-making while channeling his people's emotions for the good of the state. Assertiveness and pragmatism are crucial in government and Machiavelli emphasizes this by arguing for a leader who can act like a beast when needed. In actuality, this notion suggests that a prince must make deliberate decisions that optimize the state's strength and security, putting the needs of the state ahead of his or her own sentiments. It also prompts moral concerns about how far political leaders should be able to control or take advantage of the feelings of their constituents. In the end, Machiavelli's focus on emotional detachment is a reflection of his conviction that sentimentality is frequently subordinated to reason and strategic thinking in the pragmatic realities of leadership. Machiavelli's prescription for emotional detachment underscores the stark realities of governance, where strategic pragmatism often necessitates the suppression of personal feelings in service of the state's interests.

11. A smart council, not one made up of flatterers, is what a prince needs.

- For every state, a strong central administration and internal cohesion were necessary. The prince must appoint competent members to his council and should provide them complete freedom to advise him honestly. They must be questioned about everything, given their opinions and then allowed to think things over on their own. In the made-up country of Veridia, freshly appointed Prince Alexander knows that it is more important to surround himself with capable council members than flatterers. Adhering to Machiavelli's maxim, he chooses advisors with a wide range of experience in the legal, diplomatic, defense and economic

domains. Every council member, including general Malik Khan, a military strategist and economist Dr. Elena Ramirez, provides objective analysis and sincere counsel. Prince Alexander encourages candid communication and thoughtful discussion, giving his council members total latitude in voicing their thoughts. Prince Alexander consults his advisors before making difficult decisions, such as how to handle economic turmoil and weighs a variety of perspectives. He exhibits strong leadership in this way, using the council's combined knowledge to guide Veridia through difficulties while preserving stability and internal harmony.

12. Should make an effort to gain the favour of his people.

- The prince should work to gain the support, affection and favour of his people. By not taxing them, he should maintain the material well-being of his subjects. Due to the conservative nature of his people, the prince should refrain from interfering with their long-standing traditions and practices. He shouldn't be lusting for both money and the ladies who are his own subjects. He should keep a close eye on his critics.

13. Politics and religion must be kept apart.

- Prior to Machiavelli, mediaeval political theorists held that the state's foundation was its religion. However, Machiavelli freed the state entirely from the sway of the church. He disregarded religious mediaeval thought. He rejects Aquinas' view that man need the direction of divine law. According to Machiavelli, the pursuit of one's own happiness in terms of monetary values is the only goal a person may set for himself. He held the opinion that politics is a separate activity with its own set of rules and regulations. The state is above and separate from religion, hence moral and religious considerations cannot bind the ruler. Religion and morals are not disregarded in Machiavelli. He claims in the first chapter of the "Discourses" that princes who desire to retain themselves respect all religions and keep their chastity. He counselled the king that religion is crucial to community life. People feel more united when they practice a common faith. Religion and religious rituals create societal peace. It fosters civic responsibility and national pride as well. The people's declining regard for religion is an indication of the state's impending collapse.

III. CONCLUSION

The factual foundation of legislation and its routine application are difficult to separate in the modern notion of component power. The State will endure if it can, in Böckenförde's words, "preserve a spiritual connection with the component force, while simultaneously regulating its activity and safeguarding, in a way, the creature from its creator." It's important to recognize the source while keeping the appropriate distance. We have seen the contrast between republics whose founding principles suggest the possibility or need of going back to the beginning and those that, on the other hand, attribute their travel backward to coincidence and timing. Regeneration, in whatever form it may be produced, is essential for heterogeneous entities like republics. It entails a progression through a seemingly counterintuitive journey toward the past: the only way to go forward, live and fight corruption is to return to the original commands and the ideals that motivated them. Going back to the beginning entails keeping open the wound where politics and law first began to march in one. It is the tangible reactivation of the original conflict via its infinite repetition rather than through the homogenization of various political forces or pacification of conflict. They serve as both the source and the objective of component

power. Through this conflictual conception of politics, Machiavelli's theory makes it possible to view constituent power from a different angle and constituent power enables a different interpretation of Machiavelli: by looking through his eyes, one can not only recognise many aspects of the current debate over the nature of law but also transcend its bounds.

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