

NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI'S PERSPECTIVE OF POLITICS

POLITYKA W PERSPEKTYWIE NICCOLO MACHIAVELLEGO

Summary

In this article, the focus is on classic author Niccolo Machiavelli. Machiavelli's work has constituted the object of research and analysis from two relatively opposite perspectives: the historical one and the moral one. The aim of the paper is to present Machiavelli's approach for politics in this two perspectives.

Keywords

Niccolo Machiavelli, politics, theory of philosophy

Streszczenie

W artykule skoncentrowano się na klasyce dorobku Niccolo Machiavellego. Prace Machiavellego doprowadziły do wykształcenia się dwóch perspektyw badawczych: historycznej i moralnej. Celem artykułu jest prezentacja poglądów Niccolo Machiavellego na temat polityki z uwzględnieniem tych dwóch perspektyw.

Słowa kluczowe

Niccolo Machiavelli, polityka, teoria filozofii

INTRODUCTION

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469–1527) was a famous Italian Renaissance politician, wise philosopher, writer, historian and outstanding diplomat. His role and contributions in political thought were crucial. Nowadays a lot of philosophers consider him a father of modern political science.

Machiavelli was a very controversial politician. No doubts, his views influenced on a lot of philosophers and writers. Such outstanding philosophers as B. Russel, C. Lefort, Q. Skinner, R. Toscano, L. Strauss, Jean Jack-Rousseau, T. Campanella, J. Bodin, K. Marx, F. Engels, G. Le Bon and Hegel explored his works and reviewed his opinions.

What is more, even some famous politicians gave their opinions about Niccolo Machiavelli. For example, Napoleon and Mussolini considered the position of the writer in the political thought. In my point of view Machiavelli showed the amazing scope of knowledge, strong statements and positions about vulnerable issues. His marvellous works have changed the whole consideration of political science and have started the new era – the era of political realism with strong leaders.

To achieve the goal of the researching work it is necessary to point out which methods we will use in our work. So, we will use the main tools in the accomplishing the purpose of the research:

1. analysis,
2. synthesis,
3. comparison,
4. retrospective,
5. inductive,
6. deductive method.

In conclusion we will provide the summary of our research and we will find out if we can attain the aim of the work.

For the better understanding the positions of the philosopher it is necessary to present some aspects about his life and job. The politician was born in Florence. In that time Florence was under power of popes and religion institutions. Consequently, people tried to limit power of religion. This circumstance influenced on Machiavelli's thought about society, political system and law.

1. Machiavelli Life and His Concept of a Good Leader

He worked as diplomatic, politician and he was responsible for the Florentine militia. He worked as a diplomat for fourteen years. During this time he was meeting a plenty of politicians and statesmen across Europe [Lefort, 2012]. The most significant politicians were Louis XII and Cesare Borgia. The last politician had a great impact on Machiavelli's opinions about political ruling. Furthermore, Cesare Borgia was the role-model for Italian thinker.

Unfortunately, Machiavelli's life was complicated, he was imprisoned and tortured. This circumstance had changed his entire attitude to the world and nature of human beings. We can agree that the writer suffered for his job and political preferences.

He started to write about politicians and countries, especially about political systems of states. No doubts, Niccolo Machiavelli wrote about his own state, nonetheless,

his attempts to resolve Italian problems led to the new vision on political thought. The writer studied a lot of political issues and tried to figure them out.

The most crucial works of the politician were:

1. *Florentine Histories* or *Istorie fiorentine*;
2. *The Art of War*;
3. *The Prince*;
4. *Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livy*.

All of these books include significant information, wise recommendations and amusing statements which can be considered as unordinary and provocative.

The one of the most outstanding work of the philosopher was *The Prince*. This masterpiece has become a real handbook for significant and famous politicians. Also, we can admire that his opinions and views about political life, the art of war and managing of a state were tremendous and still inspire a plenty of rulers all around the world.

The Prince gives us the whole picture of the best leader with strong surrenders and political system which would lead to the prosperity of a state. Political system should be based on the power of arms, not the power of love and peace [Machiavelli, 1992]. Furthermore, it is better for a good leader to be sometimes cruel. Interesting that murder can be considered as a good and necessary action. However, it can be accepted as needed only if it was committed to achieve important goals for a state. The most significant information is about recommendations how to be a good prince. A good leader has to be rather a good to rule than to be a good man [Le Bon, 1895, p. 14]. Anything beyond this purpose is irrelevant for the prince. The ruler has right to change some rules if it is important to maintain his power and defend his country. However, the prince should remember that he has to be wise and possess such a difficult and desirable quality as virtue [Machiavelli, 1992]. Only person with these characteristics can make his country great and protected. Moreover, he must feel when he has to be canny as a fox and when he should be brave as a lion [Skinner, 2001, p. 41].

In addition, the most criticized and problematic point was about connection between morality, ethics, religion and political ruling. Machiavelli insisted that ethics is a cultural phenomenon [Machiavelli, 1992, p. 35]. It is obvious that this element is a result of actions of society. However, as we know, everything is changing. That's why, ethical values and moral views can be changed within some time. Consequently, everything is temporary. So, there is no reason to be under morality for a good ruler. The main criterion for separation means was usefulness or uselessness of remedies. He did not consider the questions about evil or kindness of the remedies. He did not care about ethical side of this issue, he was worry only about its effectiveness.

The philosopher added that people are weak and they have to be afraid of the punishment for their actions. That's why, he did not deny religion at all. Of course, he criticized religion of the XVI century in Italy because provided ideology influenced on all political deals and led to weakness of politicians. Machiavelli insisted that the leader had to create new laws and order. Consequently, regulation of religion is the main responsibility of the leader. So, according to Machiavelli it is better to put more importance to power than love and to politics than ethics.

It is necessary to point out that Machiavelli not only complained about religion in Italy, he also proposed advice about regulation of religion using historical examples. He showed how Roman people were manipulated by rulers with help of religion [Machiavelli, 1992]. The writer believed that a real and good ruler can make people be responsible for keeping the oath even without influence of religion.

The Prince is not about a good form of a leader. Machiavelli did not want to show a ruler as some kind of blessed and pure creation. He wanted to show the whole recommendations to rulers how to kill, manipulate, lie and use people because of his target. The thinker was honest and directed. The philosopher did not support the point of view that the prince should be a moral person with kind heart. That's why, Machiavelli's work was an amazing example of realism [Moseley, 2011, p. 65].

It is important to underline that Machiavelli's work is considered as a cynical book. Nevertheless, this issue gave value of this book. It was accepted with difficulties and sometimes the book was interpreted in a wrong way. However, *The Prince* was popular and nowadays it is still widespread and authentic. It is necessary to understand the main influence of Niccolo Machiavelli on political administration. For instance, Italian philosopher claimed that the main value in political branch of social life is a state. What is more, a lot of people consider a notion of a state with a strong connection to Machiavelli's works. He put a state in the first place. Also, Italian thinker did not pay much attention on human rights or private and individual interests. These circumstances provoked the positive reaction and acceptance of Machiavelli's thought by communist leaders. He strongly believed that people are not interested in natural rights and freedoms. They think and worry almost about protection of private property. Citizens can handle with the loss of freedom or some important rights but never with the loss of their property.

Machiavelli considered a state as a staff which includes a leader, his ministers, advisers and other subjects. Of course, the main place should be taken by a leader. He has to maintain the power, establish all rules, control the nobles and act in the interest of his country. Machiavelli claimed that a real and strong leader should not trust the nobles and sometimes use force and fear for them. What is interesting, he appreciated the role of ordinary people who can support and help a prince in some cases.

That's why one of the most important advice of Italian thinker is to not provoke a disrespectful attitude to him among the population. There are two approaches to receive respect and support from population – to use fear and to use love. The main purpose is to harmonize these feelings. Of course, the prince should prefer force and fear in ruling because these methods can be more effective and sufficient. However, the wise leader must remember that abuse of fear can stipulate population to revolutionised actions [Le Bon, 1895].

Another crucial element in political administration is attitude and relationship between the prince and nobles. No doubts, ministers and advisers should help the leader and act in his interests because he represents the interests of a state. However, sometimes it seems to be unreal. Nobles can betray the ruler and act only in their personal welfare. Consequently, the main aim for the ruler is to control and limit ministers' actions and freedom in political branch of life. He added examples of great leaders to prove his point of view. As an example he considered Turkish government. Machiavelli believed that Turkey had the king who could demonstrate all features of a good prince [Machiavelli, 1992]. The main secret of his power is that he had total control over the state. In despite it, Machiavelli claimed that barons and ministers can desire to conquer all the power and may hate a king. So, it is much easily to have all control by yourself.

Another significant issue in administration is a question of diplomatic mission and international relations. Machiavelli had an impressive experience in this field of political life. He always had his own position and struggled for it. In the considering branch Machiavelli said that the prince should be wise and carefully in his actions. Sometimes it is useful and necessary to defend your country. That's why, you need to have strong and developed army and military service. On the other hand, sometimes it is necessary to not support wars which can be occur between other states.

Machiavelli argued that in diplomatic relations the ruler has to use the law or use the force. The philosopher claimed that use of force is the method of animals and it is not the best option for people. Nonetheless, practical life showed that use of force is the most sufficient and effective remedy in diplomatic deals. No doubts, the law should exist but it would not help to protect a country and make it powerful. Moreover, the leader has to establish his own law using his wisdom and intelligence [Russel, 2012].

According to the Italian philosopher, there are some rules for considering cruelty as a positive quality. For instance, it is a good illustration when a leader applies violence from the beginning of his authority to protect of a state. Of course, the cruelty must have a target and be applied rarely. Mindless cruelty is bad; but wickedness can be honorable [Machiavelli, 1992]. Machiavelli accepts the ordinary senses of moral terms and employs conventional value judgments and he does not sanitize violence and deceit: Cruel

acts are for him cruel acts whatever the circumstances or benefits [Machiavelli, 1992]. The writer believed that the prince can use various remedies and ways to achieve the certain target. Some modern politicians even prescribe him the phrase “the goal justified the means”. However, he did not use this phrase in his works. Nevertheless, we should admit that the diplomat agreed with this statement.

Analyzing Machiavelli’s opinions on diplomatic mission we can remind the proclamation of K. Marx. German philosopher wrote that the perception of force as the main element in law was derived from views of Machiavelli, Spinoza, Hobbs and Bodin [Shults, 2014, p. 39].

Machiavelli did not use the notion of a state sovereignty. Nevertheless, he was closed to formulate this issue. He considered that a state should possess all features which make it strong and independent in the internal deals and in the relationships with other countries. Nonetheless, Machiavellian perception of power was differed from his followers and opponents. For example, he considered sovereignty as the absolute and unlimited power of the prince. Only he is able to decide the political issues.

We can lead to the conclusion that Niccolo Machiavelli claimed that the main element in diplomatic mission is to have a strong army and be ready to use military force in order to protect it. Talking about war and army we can put our attention on another famous and impressive work of the philosopher *The Art of War*. He formulated the notion of limited welfare [Machiavelli, 2006]. This term means that in the case when diplomacy fails, which is usual situation, the leader should provide war. Moreover, all social institutions are depended from army. This statement has the following explanation – there will be no institutions and state at all without protection and defence.

Special attention in political administration deserves Machiavellian views about republic. Machiavelli absolutely clear described his opinion on republic in his renowned book *The Discourses on the Ten Books of Titus Livy*. Machiavelli thought that the best way for a state is to establish republican form of power [Machiavelli, 2014]. No doubts, the ruler has to hold all power in his hands, however, it does not mean that monarchy is the best solution for this implementation. Only republic can lead to the prosperity because it is the best form of public organization. This point of view seems to be quite surprising because of the other Machiavellian opinions on politics. However, this point of view received recognition and support from the modern thinkers and politicians.

During his research the writer questioned painful issue – corruption. Machiavelli strongly believed that Roman Empire did not have corruption and Roman citizens were not corrupted because of the strict order of this country. Every Roman citizen knew the price for the corruption and was obligated to be checked in established period of time. All these remedies gave the amusing results.

Machiavelli often considered this problematic point because strongly believed that for people it is easy to be corrupted. This fact is connected with not perfect human nature. It is normal for people to want and gain their own awards but states should restrict and limit it. What is more, the writer says that we can see the parallel between corrupted person and soldier who fights for his glory. In both ways it is totally understandable and even desirable. However, we have to remember that soldier should fight for not only his interests and remember about his motherhood. In respect it, the citizen has to act in the interests of common good.

2. An Overview of Historical Politicians and Their Ability to Be a Machiavellian Leader

One of the most interesting and practical aspects of analyzing the influence of Machiavelli on political administration is showing the impact on historical famous politicians such as Stalin, Mussolini and Napoleon.

One of the best examples of Machiavellian Prince was Stalin. The leader of the Soviet Union was one of the bloodiest tyrants in the 20th century [Berthon, 2007, p. 876]. Nevertheless, he was supported and loved because of his cult, propaganda and cruel decision in order to develop the country. Stalin followed the main Machiavellian recommendations [Таненбаум, 2012, p. 47]. For instance, he:

1. paralyzed individual intelligence,
2. supported national prejudice,
3. hid everything that was going on in the world,
4. acted aggressively in international relations,
5. tried to use all scope of military service in order to protect the state from enemies,
6. prohibited absolute freedom,
7. controlled his surrenders,
8. dispensed justice without courts,
9. used military force to maintain the power,
10. created followers of the prince's regime,
11. cultivated the cult of the usurper to the degree of religion,
12. oppressed public opinion,
13. changed the true meaning of words,
14. taught others of history of his ruling,
15. captured his name everywhere,
16. used fear and force,
17. took advantage of the transformation of people into informers.

All these actions in Stalin's authority allowed him to receive astonished results in the branch of political administration. All supporters and ministers had to follow his wishes and negligent all human rights and private interests.

It is necessary to admit that Stalin did not show his respect to Machiavelli, nevertheless, his admirers could see the connection between Machiavellian thought and Stalin's decisions.

Machiavelli also had a great impact on Mussolini. He influenced on fascism and implemented military force in order to impose this regime. Mussolini tried to be Machiavellian Prince because he admired Machiavelli and measured him as a creator of real political science. He claimed that the strong and responsible leader has to kill or to caress people. In addition, Mussolini strongly believed that people can take revenge for a small evil but never for the big one [Berthon, 2007, p. 41]. Italian leader shared the Machiavellian point of view that all people are weak and have to be under strict control of administration. Mussolini claimed that Machiavelli's *The Prince* is the best book for Italian dictatorship because it is about absolute power and wise leader who will lead his country to the best future in economical and political sense. Fascist leader strongly believed that the main issue in political affairs is to have power and only power [Lien, 1929, p. 14]. Nevertheless, we can see the results of his appreciation of Machiavellism.

Consequently, Machiavelli influenced on Italian fascism and some dictators. It is generally accepted in political thought that Machiavellism can prosper in totalitarian regimes and during revolutions. It can be excused because of the nature of strong and non-compromise opinions of the Italian thinker.

We have to notice that a lot of significant politicians were embodiments of Machiavelli's Prince. To illustrate it, we should remember about another crucial and powerful leader – Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon was a miser and strong prince, who always thinks about war, reputation of France and provides very strict political actions [Stearns, 1903, p. 58]. It is necessary to say that Napoleon did not support theoretical views of Machiavelli, nevertheless he followed his recommendations. Some philosophers still argue that only Napoleon was the greatest example of Machiavellian prince. He was smart, brave, act only in the interests of his country, made a strong military support and did not care about moral aspects of his political activity. No doubts, Bonaparte read a lot about Machiavelli and used his clever advice. However, the main question is would he consider himself as Machiavelli's prince.

Obviously, all these leaders were strong and influenced. They had a significant support and received an enormously huge recognition. However, their figures were contro-

versial. We cannot deny that all of these leaders used inhumanity methods, negligent human dignity and human rights and led their countries and regimes to a collapse.

3. An Overview of Modern Politicians and Their Ability to Be a Machiavellian Leader

Considering the topic it is crucial to pay attention on modern politicians and analyze their ability to be a Machiavellian Prince [D'Amato, 1972, p. 32].

The most powerful and strict leader of our time is the ruler of North Korea Kim Jong-un. Totalitarian regime and fear of population allow him to make control over all aspects of social and even private life of people. He has the strong and well-developed army, he establishes the law and refuses all religion norms which can limit his absolute power. All ministers have to support and appreciate him and the whole administrative mechanism should exist in accordance with the leader's wishes. To tell the truth, it is extremely difficult to make polls among population of North Korea and receive accurate results of supporting this leader. However, it is pretty obvious that propaganda and strict rules help Kim Jong-un to maintain the power.

Muammar Gaddafi can be considered as Machiavellian Prince in some aspects [Llanila, 2014]. For instance, Libyan leader restricted opposition and was a huge fan of military service. He used force in the way to oppress people who did not support him and his regime. It is necessary and interesting to point out that he used the Machiavellian advice to apply fear, however, population supported him and did not hate Gaddafi. He received great results in economic branch and tried to protect his country from others. Nevertheless, the fact that he eliminated all opposite parties and suppressed a lot of people led to the conflict with other states. Of course, this circumstance unenthusiastically influenced on his future life.

Modern philosophers deem Vladimir Putin as a great example of Machiavellian leader. For example, Russian President develops army and tries to provide aggressive position of his state with other entities [Nikitin, 2013]. All administrative machine and all branches of power should act in accordance with Putin's permission. Despite the fact that Russia does not have a good level of human rights' protection, citizens of Russian Federation support Russian leader.

Nowadays Machiavellian opinions and Machiavellism seem to be very controversial and hard for understanding. The most problematic issue is to perceive the desire of politicians to be Machiavellian Prince and results from these actions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is necessary to say that Machiavelli created special rules, gave his own opinions on states and on problematic issues in his times. No doubts, his views were really extremely progressive for Italy, however, he created the whole new branch of science, influenced on the most renowned politicians, lawyers and philosophers and changed attitude to the ruling of states.

His opinions on the features of prince were controversial, sometimes aggressive and immoral. However, on the other hand, he opened and described the picture of successful politician who loves his country and acts in its interests. That's the crucial point. Obviously, to be Machiavellian Prince is incredibly difficult work and assignment. Consequently, this mission is not for weak persons who hesitate in their own decisions.

Machiavelli influenced on the most famous politicians and political science at all. His views were criticized by a lot of politicians and philosophers, he even was called as a son of devil because of his opinions on religion and morality. Nevertheless, his views are still relevant, helpful and interesting for modern politicians and leaders in other social activities. No doubts, Machiavelli created a new and broad way of thinking about leadership in all branches of power. That's why, we can consider the Italian thinker as one of the most famous, extraordinary and fascinating figures in political administration and political science.

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