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## Machiavelli and Modern Politics: Relevance of Political Realism in the Contemporary Age

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### ABSTRACT

This paper explores Niccolò Machiavelli's ongoing importance in contemporary political theory and practice. Machiavelli is regarded as one of the foundational thinkers of contemporary political science because he portrayed politics as a practical activity focused on power, strategy, and human nature rather than morality. His ideas, particularly those contained in *The Prince*, continue to have an impact on contemporary political leadership, diplomacy, governance, and international relations. The second segment examines Machiavelli's political realism and knowledge of statecraft. He felt that a competent ruler must sometimes deviate from conventional morality in order to maintain political stability and safeguard the state. This section discusses how his practical approach contradicted idealistic political conceptions and paved the way for current political analysis. The applicability of Machiavellian concepts in contemporary politics is covered in the third section. To accomplish political objectives, modern political leaders frequently employ coalitions, power management, public image-building, and strategic communication. The section then looks at how various facets of Machiavellian political behaviour in both democratic and authoritarian systems are reflected in election campaigns, foreign policy choices, and media influence. The fourth section critically assesses Machiavelli's political thought in the twenty-first century, both

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positively and negatively. Supporters regard him as a pragmatic thinker who grasped the realities of political life, while others argue that his beliefs foster deception and immoral politics. The study concludes that Machiavelli's political realism is critical to understanding the nature of power and government in the modern period.

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## **Introduction:**

### **Machiavelli and the Rise of Political Realism:**

Niccolò Machiavelli is often considered as a key figure in Western political thought. Machiavelli was born in Florence in 1469, amid the Renaissance, and experienced political instability, foreign invasions, and fights between Italian city-states. These events had a significant impact on his political thinking, leading to a more realistic understanding of politics and power. Unlike earlier political thinkers like Plato and Aristotle, who emphasised morality and ideal political systems, Machiavelli was more concerned with the practical realities of governing and statecraft.

Written in 1513, Machiavelli's most well-known work, *The Prince*, is still regarded as one of the foundational works of contemporary political science. In it, he explained how rulers could gain, hold, and strengthen political power, arguing that politics should be understood independently of ethics and religion because a ruler's main responsibility is to protect the state and maintain political stability (Machiavelli, 2019). This approach marked a significant shift in political thought and introduced the idea that political decisions are frequently motivated by power, national interest, and practical necessity rather than moral principles.

One of Machiavelli's more contentious theories is that, in order for the state to survive, a competent ruler must occasionally employ force, trickery, or manipulation. Many academics understand his political thought in this sense, even though he never explicitly said that "the end justifies the means" (Skinner, 2000). A monarch should be astute, strategic, and able to adjust to shifting political circumstances, according to Machiavelli. According to him, rulers must use care and strength since people are inherently self-centered, ambitious, and untrustworthy (Machiavelli, 2019).

His concept of realism can be seen in international relations, electoral politics, foreign policy, and leadership practices across various nations. Political analysts commonly use the term "Machiavellian" to describe leaders who put political success and state interests ahead of moral considerations. Machiavelli's



ideas are still relevant in today's political world. Modern governments and political leaders frequently employ diplomacy, propaganda, image-building, and power management strategies that reflect Machiavellian political thinking.

However, Machiavelli's theories have also come under fire for promoting authoritarianism and immoral political behaviour. Many academics contend that an overemphasis on power could erode democratic principles and morality in politics. Others, however, defend Machiavelli by claiming that he did not advocate immorality but rather merely documented the facts of political life (Sabine & Thorson, 1973). Therefore, analysing both classical and contemporary political systems requires an understanding of Machiavelli.

#### *Machiavelli's Concept of Political Realism and Statecraft:*

Niccolò Machiavelli is widely recognised as the founder of political realism in Western political thought. The term "political realism" describes a method of analysing politics that prioritises power, pragmatic need, and state interest over moral or religious principles. During the volatile political climate of Renaissance Italy, where political plots, foreign invasions, and internal disputes were frequent, Machiavelli developed this viewpoint. His perception that strong and effective leadership was the only way to preserve political stability was moulded by these historical events (Sabine & Thorson, 1973).

The Prince, written in 1513, is the best example of Machiavelli's political views. He clarified in this essay that a ruler's essential duty is to uphold political power and protect the state. Because political situations frequently call for challenging and calculated measures, Machiavelli argues that rulers cannot constantly adhere to traditional morality (Machiavelli, 2019). He maintained that a prudent leader should be able to act in accordance with circumstances and should be able to use force, diplomacy, or deceit as necessary to safeguard the state (Berlin, 1997).

Machiavelli's separation of politics from ethics and religion is one of the most significant features of his political realism. Thomas Aquinas and other mediaeval political philosophers held that Christian morality and divine law should govern politics. By contending that political actions should be evaluated based on their outcomes rather than their moral intentions, Machiavelli questioned this conventional wisdom (Skinner, 2000). He felt that as the state's existence is the ultimate political goal, successful leaders must prioritise stability and efficacy (Wayper, 1979).

In order to explain the qualities needed for effective leadership, Machiavelli introduced the concept of *virtù*, which encompasses traits like intelligence, courage, decisiveness, practical wisdom, and strategic



ability. According to Machiavelli, rulers who possess virtù are capable of controlling political situations and effectively responding to challenges (Machiavelli, 2019). In addition to virtù, he discussed the concept of fortuna, which means fortune or luck. He believed that although fortune influences political events, capable rulers can control their destiny through careful planning and strong leadership (Skinner, 1981).

Machiavelli's comprehension of human nature is another important aspect of his realism. He maintained that people are typically self-centered, ambitious, unappreciative, and driven by their own interests (Machiavelli, 2019). As a result, leaders shouldn't rely solely on the allegiance or sentimental attachment of the populace. His well-known statement that "it is much safer to be feared than loved" illustrates his practical view of political power (Machiavelli, 2019, p. 66). He did, however, caution that rulers should avoid being despised since animosity can spark uprisings and unstable political environments. This shows that Machiavelli did not advocate cruelty for its own sake but rather saw it as a political tool to uphold law and order when needed (Sabine & Thorson, 1973).

Machiavelli's political realism is regarded by contemporary academics as having had a significant impact on the advancement of contemporary political science and international relations theory. His realistic grasp of power dynamics and state interest impacted thinkers like Hans J. Morgenthau and Thomas Hobbes (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). Governments still employ Machiavellian concepts in modern politics through the employment of intelligence systems, military readiness, strategic diplomacy, and image management. Political success and the interests of the state are frequently given precedence above moral principles in election campaigns, foreign policy, and national security plans.

Thus, Machiavelli's concept of political realism marked a turning point in Western political thought. By presenting politics as an independent sphere governed by power and necessity, he transformed the study of political leadership and statecraft. His ideas remain significant for understanding both historical and contemporary political systems.

### **Relevance of Machiavellian Thought in Contemporary Politics:**

Because many facets of contemporary politics mirror the ideas explored in Niccolò Machiavelli's political writings, he continues to be one of the most influential political philosophers in the modern era. Despite writing in the sixteenth century, Machiavelli's theories on statecraft, power, leadership, diplomacy, and political strategy still have an impact on political systems all over the world. In order to



preserve power and safeguard national interests, contemporary political leaders, governments, and policymakers frequently use tactical and strategic approaches akin to Machiavellian political realism.

Political leadership is one of the most important domains in which Machiavelli's effect is evident. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli contended that in order to preserve political stability, a ruler must be intelligent, resolute, brave, and flexible (Machiavelli, 2019). Strong leadership is also demanded of modern political leaders in times of crisis, including pandemics, wars, economic instability, and social unrest. Strategic choices made by leaders are often motivated more by political necessity than by moral idealism. This illustrates Machiavelli's contention that practical action, rather than just ethical considerations, is frequently necessary for effective governance (Skinner, 2000).

Machiavelli's theories can also be found in contemporary political discourse and electoral politics. To sway public opinion and garner political support, political parties and leaders employ public relations techniques, image-building, media campaigns, and slogans. Election campaigns in many democracies prioritise perception management and political strategy over ideological commitment alone. Heywood (2017) asserts that media influence, strategic communication, and leadership image—all of which are very similar to Machiavellian techniques of political persuasion—are becoming increasingly important in modern politics.

International relations is a significant area where Machiavellian philosophy is still applicable. When making judgements about foreign policy, modern states frequently give priority to national security, power, and interest. In anarchic international systems, realist international political scientists contend that governments act mainly to safeguard their strategic interests and sovereignty (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). Machiavelli's political realism is heavily reflected in this strategy. Strategic talks, military alliances, intelligence operations, and international diplomacy are often driven more by power dynamics than by moral principles. The strategic and pragmatic approach that Machiavelli promoted centuries ago is frequently reflected in the foreign affairs of strong nations.

The connection between politics and morality further demonstrates Machiavelli's applicability. He thought that when political stability and state security are under jeopardy, authorities shouldn't always be constrained by moral standards (Machiavelli, 2019). In the modern world, governments may use the justification of national security and public order to defend stringent legislation, surveillance programmes, emergency powers, or military operations. Because they put the interests of the state ahead of morality, political analysts frequently refer to such actions as Machiavellian (Berlin, 1997).



In contemporary democracies, Machiavellian politics has also been criticised. Opponents contend that an over-reliance on power politics, propaganda, and manipulation could erode democratic principles, openness, and human rights. Machiavelli was seen by academics like Leo Strauss as a theorist who dangerously divorced politics from morality (Strauss, 1958). Nonetheless, proponents contend that Machiavelli did not advocate immorality but rather made an effort to explain politics in a realistic manner as it actually functions in society (Sabine & Thorson, 1973).

In conclusion, because power, strategy, leadership, and national interest are still central to modern politics, Machiavelli's political philosophy is still very relevant today. His practical grasp of political behaviour offers significant insights into international relations, diplomacy, government, and electoral politics. As a result, Machiavelli continues to be a crucial theorist for comprehending the structure and operation of contemporary political institutions.

### *Critical Evaluation of Machiavelli's Political Philosophy in the Twenty-First Century*

Because his political philosophy continues to inspire both respect and criticism in the contemporary world, Niccolò Machiavelli holds a special place in the annals of Western political thought. His pragmatic view of politics has had a significant impact on leadership studies, international relations, and political science. However, many academics have questioned the moral implications of his theories, particularly his focus on political necessity and power. Therefore, in order to comprehend Machiavelli's political philosophy's applicability and constraints in the twenty-first century, a critical assessment of it is necessary.

Machiavelli's realistic approach to politics was one of his greatest accomplishments. Prior to Machiavelli, political theorists mostly talked about moral government and ideal governments. By examining politics as it actually functions in society rather than how it should ideally function, Machiavelli broke with this tradition (Sabine & Thorson, 1973). He concentrated on political stability, effective government, and the conduct of both citizens and leaders. Later, this realistic approach served as the cornerstone of contemporary political science and had an impact on political philosophers like Hans J. Morgenthau, Max Weber, and Thomas Hobbes (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013).

In modern politics, Machiavelli's focus on strong leadership is still applicable. Governments frequently need to exercise decisive leadership and strategic planning during times of war, economic crisis, terrorism, pandemics, or political instability. His idea of *virtù* emphasises the value of bravery, intelligence, flexibility, and political acumen in leadership (Machiavelli, 2019). Machiavelli's view that



political success depends on practical skill rather than just moral idealism is reflected in the fact that modern political leaders are often evaluated based on their capacity to handle crises.

But Machiavelli's political theory has also come under heavy fire for promoting dictatorship and immoral political behaviour. His detachment of politics from morality, according to many detractors, undermines democratic principles and moral obligation. His talk on fear, deceit, and manipulation has frequently been seen as endorsing unethical politics. Because Machiavelli defended political activities that disregarded traditional morality, Leo Strauss characterised him as a teacher of evil (Strauss, 1958). Similarly, detractors contend that an overabundance of Machiavellianism in contemporary politics could encourage corruption, misinformation, abuse of authority, and the repression of civil freedoms.

Machiavelli's political realism may not be entirely appropriate for democratic nations founded on responsibility, human rights, and constitutionalism, according to another significant critique. In contemporary democracies, leaders are expected to respect individual liberties and public opinion while adhering to moral and legal norms. An overemphasis on power politics could undermine democratic institutions and public confidence. The risks of implementing Machiavellian tactics without ethical constraints are frequently illustrated by current political scandals, authoritarian inclinations, and media abuse (Heywood, 2017).

Despite these objections, many academics defend Machiavelli by claiming that he described political reality as it existed in his day rather than endorsing immorality for personal benefit. Quentin Skinner argues that Machiavelli's writings should be interpreted in light of Renaissance Italy's political unrest and foreign invasions (Skinner, 1981). Rather than encouraging violence or dictatorship, his main priority was the security and cohesion of the state. As a result, some contemporary academics see Machiavelli not as an unethical thinker but as a useful political analyst.

Hence, Machiavelli's political philosophy remains highly significant in the twenty-first century because it offers a realistic understanding of politics, leadership, and statecraft. His theories still have an impact on contemporary political strategy, diplomacy, and government. However, the implementation of Machiavellian ideas needs to be tempered with human rights, ethical responsibilities, and democratic norms. Thus, in modern political analysis, Machiavelli continues to be both a contentious and essential thinker.



## **Machiavelli's Contribution to Modern Political Thought:**

Niccolò Machiavelli introduced a practical and scientific approach to the study of politics, which revolutionised the evolution of contemporary political philosophy. Because he considered politics as an independent field of study and distinguished it from theology and morality, he is frequently referred to as the “father of modern political science” (Gettel, 1953). Machiavelli studied politics by observation, experience, and practical reasoning, in contrast to mediaeval theorists who believed that political authority was guided by God. His political theories mark the shift from mediaeval political philosophy to contemporary secular political analysis.

Machiavelli's rejection of idealism in political theory was one of his most significant contributions. Previous philosophers like Thomas Aquinas and Plato concentrated on moral government and ideal states. On the other hand, Machiavelli focused on how citizens and rulers actually behaved. According to him, political theory need to be grounded in actual political circumstances rather than theoretical ideals (Barker, 1960). This practical approach established the groundwork for empirical political analysis and gave Western political thought a new direction.

Machiavelli made a substantial contribution to the contemporary notion of the state. Italy was politically weakened and divided throughout the Renaissance due to both foreign invasions and internal strife. Machiavelli was a fervent advocate of a cohesive, stable state run by capable leaders. According to Ramaswamy (2011), Machiavelli believed that the state was the highest political institution and that the employment of necessary political tactics was justified in order to preserve it. His focus on centralised power, political unity, and sovereignty subsequently impacted the formation of contemporary European nation-states. Machiavelli thought a unified state and his idea of state craft contributed to the rise of nation-state in Europe. The fear of the mighty Ottoman Empire cannot be denied for consolidating a European idea of nation-state. As Arnab Chatterjee says: "The rise of the Ottoman Empire in the thirteenth century brings out the grand military and political success of the Arabs. Europe at that time was afraid of a possible military aggression by the Arabs and they viewed Islam as a strong counter-force." (Chatterjee, 2022) Though Machiavelli wrote in the sixteenth century, the strength of Ottoman Empire remains an invisible threat for the consolidation of the European identity.

Machiavelli's study of power politics was another significant contribution. He clarified that in order for rulers to effectively manage, they must comprehend the truths of human nature and that power is the fundamental component of political life. According to Machiavelli, rulers should rely on political strategy and practical wisdom rather than emotional idealism because individuals are often self-interested,



ambitious, and unstable (Mukherjee & Ramaswamy, 2011). Later, contemporary realism scholars in political science and international relations were impacted by his realistic view.

In the area of leadership studies, Machiavelli's influence is also significant. He talked about traits like bravery, decisiveness, flexibility, and intelligence that are essential for good leadership in *The Prince*. According to Machiavelli (2019), his concept of virtue highlighted the potential of rulers to influence political events through skill and resolve. Machiavelli's leadership ideas are frequently linked by contemporary political theorists to modern diplomacy, crisis management, and government. Appadorai (2003) asserts that Machiavelli's theories still have an impact on contemporary states' practical conceptions of political leadership and administration.

A number of contemporary political philosophers, such as Max Weber, Jean Bodin, and Thomas Hobbes, were impacted by Machiavelli's political realism. Later, realist views in international relations and contemporary statecraft were influenced by his separation of politics from ethics (Das, 1984). Machiavellian political ideas are reflected in the policies that modern governments frequently implement, which are centred on national interest, security, diplomacy, and strategic planning.

But academics have also disagreed over Machiavelli's contribution. His political worldview, according to some detractors, promotes manipulation and tyranny. Some contend that he didn't encourage immorality; rather, he just explained the facts of politics (Barker, 1960). His impact on political philosophy is nevertheless indisputable in spite of these arguments.

Thus, by bringing realism, secularism, and practical analysis to politics, Machiavelli changed the character of political thought. His views on government, power, leadership, and statecraft were vital in forming contemporary political science. His political theory is still very important for comprehending the composition and operation of modern political systems.

#### *Machiavelli and Contemporary Democratic Politics:*

Niccolò Machiavelli's realistic views on power, leadership, and governance are reflected in many aspects of contemporary democratic politics, which is why he is still important today. Several of Machiavelli's political theories are still relevant in modern democratic nations, despite the fact that he lived during the Renaissance and wrote mostly about princely authority. Machiavellian political realism is evident in many aspects of contemporary democratic politics, including strategic leadership, electoral rivalry, political communication, diplomacy, and power management.



Machiavelli's emphasis on leadership traits is among the most significant features of his applicability in democratic politics. Machiavelli contended in *The Prince* that effective leaders need to have boldness, adaptability, decisiveness, and practical wisdom (Machiavelli, 2019). In a similar vein, modern democratic leaders are required to successfully handle public demonstrations, diplomatic disputes, economic crises, and administrative difficulties. These days, political leadership is evaluated not just on moral principles but also on administrative effectiveness and the capacity to uphold political stability. Ebenstein (1969) asserts that Machiavelli's political realism contributed to the transition of political analysis from ethical idealism to pragmatic government.

Strong Machiavellian traits are also evident in contemporary electoral politics. To win over the public, political parties and leaders often employ public relations strategies, media campaigns, strategic alliances, and catchphrases. Instead of concentrating only on intellectual coherence, election campaigns frequently emphasise political image-building and persuasion. According to Heywood (2017), public opinion is crucial to election success in contemporary democratic politics, which have become more media-centric and leadership-oriented. This illustrates Machiavelli's contention that in order to retain power, rulers must carefully manage their public image.

The application of diplomacy and political strategy in governance is another area in which Machiavelli is still important. To accomplish political objectives, democratic administrations frequently engage in coalition formation, negotiations, and strategic decision-making. According to Machiavelli, leaders should follow shifting conditions and political need rather than strict moral precepts (Mukherjee & Ramaswamy, 2011). Governments in contemporary democracies frequently make practical choices about issues including public administration, national security, foreign policy, and economic changes. Because they put the interests of the state and political stability first, their choices often exhibit Machiavellian realism.

Machiavelli's impact can also be seen in democratic governments' international politics. Modern democracies engage in economic agreements, intelligence collaboration, military alliances, and diplomatic tactics based on national interests. Machiavelli's conception of power politics and statecraft is strikingly similar to realist views of international relations (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). During times of crisis or conflict, even democratic countries frequently implement strategic policies that priorities national security over moral reasons.

But there are also significant ethical issues with Machiavelli's applicability to democratic politics. Critics contend that an over-reliance on political strategy, misinformation, and manipulation could erode public



confidence and democratic accountability. Constitutional principles, openness, and the defence of individual rights are the cornerstones of contemporary democratic systems. As a result, the unchecked deployment of Machiavellian strategies may promote political power abuse, corruption, and authoritarian inclinations (Sabine & Thorson, 1973). In many democracies, political scandals, disinformation operations, and media manipulation serve as examples of the potential risks associated with unethical political behaviour.

Despite these objections, many academics contend that rather than being a clear support of immorality, Machiavelli's theories should be viewed as a realistic study of political behaviour. According to Gettel (1953), Machiavelli attempted to explain the actual functioning of political systems in times of instability and conflict. His political realism helps students and scholars understand the practical challenges faced by governments and leaders in contemporary democracies.

Because of this modern administration still requires leadership, strategy, diplomacy, and power management, Machiavelli's political theory is still very applicable in democratic politics. Although his theories must be balanced with democratic ethics, accountability, and constitutional norms, his realistic approach offers significant insights into how modern political institutions operate.

#### *Machiavelli's Views on Human Nature and Political Leadership*

Niccolò Machiavelli's political philosophy reflects a realistic grasp of human nature and political action. He believed that understanding human nature is essential for understanding politics. Unlike idealist thinkers who saw humans as rational and morally guided, Machiavelli believed that individuals are primarily greedy, ambitious, unstable, and motivated by personal gain (Machiavelli, 2019). This realistic knowledge of human nature served as the foundation for his idea of political realism, which had a significant impact on later political philosophy.

Machiavelli believed that as human behaviour varies depending on the situation, rulers should not rely solely on the loyalty, morality, or emotional attachment of the populace. He noted that individuals are frequently "ungrateful, fickle, false, cowardly, and covetous" in *The Prince* (Machiavelli, 2019, p. 62). Political leaders must therefore exercise care, intellect, and common sense when governing. According to Machiavelli, in order to preserve political stability and power, effective leaders must comprehend the facts of human conduct (Gettel, 1953).

Machiavelli's idea of *virtù* is one of his most significant contributions to political philosophy. The phrase alludes to traits like bravery, intelligence, decisiveness, flexibility, and strategic skill that are essential for



successful political leadership. Machiavelli asserts that leaders with virtù are able to manage political circumstances and effectively handle difficulties and crises (Mukherjee & Ramaswamy, 2011). He maintained that a ruler's personal aptitude and practical skill are just as important to political success as luck or fortune.

Machiavelli also talked about how love and fear interact in politics. He famously said that if both cannot coexist, it is safer for a ruler to be feared than adored (Machiavelli, 2019). He thought that whereas love is erratic because people frequently act in their own best interests, fear fosters discipline and obedience. But Machiavelli opposed needless oppression and brutality. He cautioned that since hatred can spark uprisings and political instability, leaders must avoid becoming despised (Wayper, 1979). This suggests that his political counsel was targeted at maintaining order and state security rather than fostering violence.

Machiavelli's leadership theories are still applicable in modern politics. To preserve power and political support, contemporary political leaders frequently employ administrative control, diplomatic negotiation, public image management, and strategic communication. In times of economic crisis, war, terrorism, or social upheaval, governments often take decisive action to maintain political stability. Appadorai (2003) asserts that Machiavelli's practical view of leadership still has an impact on contemporary political administration and governance. However, Machiavelli's theories about leadership and human nature have come under fire for promoting authoritarianism and deceptive politics. Opponents contend that an over-reliance on political calculation, tactics, and fear could erode democratic principles and moral leadership. Supporters, however, contend that Machiavelli did not advocate immorality but rather made an effort to portray politics as it actually occurs in society (Barker, 1960). As a result, his books continue to offer significant insights into the connection between human behaviour, leadership, and power.

#### *Machiavelli's Influence on Modern International Relations and Diplomacy:*

The impact of Niccolò Machiavelli on contemporary diplomatic and international relations is examined in this section. According to Machiavelli, political leadership should continue to prioritise the state's survival and security. In his view, in order to safeguard national interests, leaders must rely on military might, strategic diplomacy, and sound judgement (Machiavelli, 2019). Later, one of the pillars of realism theory in international relations was his pragmatic understanding of politics.

The section goes on to describe how power politics, alliance formation, military readiness, intelligence systems, and diplomatic discussions are some of the ways that contemporary states still adhere to



Machiavellian ideas. Machiavelli's political realism is strongly reflected in the emphasis placed by realist historians like Hans J. Morgenthau that national interests and power struggles dominate international politics (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). Machiavellian statecraft is still relevant in international politics, as evidenced by current foreign policy, geopolitical rivalry, and strategic alliances among governments. As a result, the section emphasises how important Machiavelli's theories are to comprehending international relations, national security, and diplomacy in the contemporary world.

Another important aspect discussed in this section is the relevance of Machiavelli's ideas in contemporary global conflicts and diplomatic crises. In the present international system, powerful nations frequently adopt strategic policies to secure economic advantages, territorial influence, and military dominance. Governments often justify defence expansion, intelligence operations, and foreign interventions in the name of national security and political stability. According to Wight (1991), realist political thought continues to dominate international politics because states primarily act to preserve power and sovereignty. Machiavelli's political realism therefore remains highly relevant in explaining the behaviour of modern states within an increasingly competitive and conflict-oriented global order.

#### *Conclusion: Continuing Relevance of Machiavelli in the Contemporary Age*

Because his political theories continue to describe the reality of contemporary politics and government, Niccolò Machiavelli is still regarded as one of the most significant theorists in the history of Western political thought. Machiavelli's conception of political realism, his views on human nature and leadership, his impact on democratic politics, and his contributions to statecraft and international relations have all been covered in the parts that came before this one. These analysis make it abundantly evident that Machiavelli's political theory is still applicable in the twenty-first century and is not exclusive to Renaissance Italy.

Machiavelli's realistic political analysis was one of his best achievements. Machiavelli studied politics as it actually occurs in society, in contrast to idealist thinkers who focused on morality and ideal political structures. In his view, good governance requires an understanding of power, political need, and human conduct (Machiavelli, 2019). His distinction between politics and ethics marking the start of contemporary political science and made political theory study a useful field (Gettel, 1953).

Machiavellian ideas are strongly reflected in the political landscape of today. In both domestic and international politics, modern governments nevertheless place a high priority on state interest, political stability, and national security. To hold onto power, political leaders often employ coalition building,



diplomacy, strategic communication, and public image control. The pragmatic political strategies that Machiavelli articulated centuries ago are frequently revealed through election campaigns, media influence, foreign policy choices, and crisis management (Heywood, 2017). His views are particularly evident in realist theories of international relations, which view national interest and power as essential components of world politics (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013).

Moreover, Machiavelli's theory of leadership is still very applicable today. His definition of *virtù* placed a strong emphasis on traits like bravery, intelligence, decisiveness, and flexibility. In times of economic crisis, war, social unrest, or international calamities, modern political leaders are also required to exhibit administrative effectiveness and strategic capability. Mukherjee and Ramaswamy (2011) claim that Machiavelli saw political leadership as a realistic skill that calls for caution and adaptability rather than naïve idealism.

Nonetheless, there is still opposition to Machiavelli's political theory. Many academics contend that an over-reliance on fear, manipulation, and power politics could undermine human rights, democratic principles, and moral governance. Machiavelli's theories were deemed harmful by critics like Leo Strauss because they distinguished between politics and morality (Strauss, 1958). Political systems are expected to strike a balance between constitutionalism, accountability, ethical responsibility, and efficient governance in the contemporary democratic world. Consequently, there are restrictions on the application of Machiavellian political techniques.

However, many contemporary academics defend Machiavelli by claiming that he did not encourage immorality for his own benefit but rather made an effort to explain the reality of political life during a time of unrest and strife (Barker, 1960). His political realism offers insightful perspectives on international relations, leadership, governance, and diplomacy. Even now, calculated and power-driven political activity is commonly referred to as "Machiavellian" by political experts.

In conclusion, Machiavelli's realistic view of politics, power, and governance is what makes him relevant in the modern era. His theories still have an impact on international relations, democratic politics, and contemporary political leadership worldwide. He made a lasting and important contribution to political theory, despite the fact that certain of his philosophical ideas are still debatable. As a result, Machiavelli is still regarded as one of the key figures in contemporary political science and political realism.

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