

# Morality Of Power

Gücün Ahlakı

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### ABSTRACT

We are in a new decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, new threats and opportunities are arising for the peace which we observe among our sandbox of international world politics. However, we should never forget why the constant flow of new dangers, opportunities and chaos keeps circling around and why humanity is evolving around the politics. Power is the answer for why and power is the essence of human nature for all. But we also should remember another great essence for human nature is, morality. When power and morality come into the same picture, that's when the core of both these immense structures starts to be shaken. Losing one of them causes another to be dominant forever, but to keep them in balance is the struggle against corruption. Can morality survive under the hunger for power or power always corrupts the morality without a turning point? Those are the real questions which are constant for centuries some might say since the Machiavelli's approach to realism of politics brought even more to these questions. This article will focus over the power, and its morality to our lives and to the effects over politics in some sense.

**Keywords:** Power, morality, politics, Machiavelli

### ÖZET

21. yüzyılın yeni on yılındayız, uluslararası dünya politikalarımız arasından gözlemlediğimiz barış için yeni tehditler ve fırsatlar yükseliyor. Ancak, sürekli yeni tehlikeler, fırsatlar ve kaos akışının neden etrafına dolaştığını ve insanlığın neden politika etrafında evrildiğini asla unutmamalıyız. Güç bu neden sorusunun cevabıdır ve güç herkes için insan doğasının özü olmaktadır. Ama aynı zamanda insan doğası için başka büyük bir öz olan, ahlakı da hatırlamamız gerekir. Güç ve ahlak aynı resme girdiğinde, bu iki büyük yapı çekirdeğine kadar sarsılmaya başlar. Bunlardan birini kaybetmek diğerinin sonsuza dek baskın olmasına neden olur, ancak onları dengede tutmak ise yolsuzlukla mücadeledir. Ahlak güce olan açlığın altında hayatta kalabilir mi, ya da güç her zaman bir dönüm noktası olmadan ahlakı mı bozar? Yüzyıllardır sabit olan bu asıl sorulara Machiavelli'nin siyaset gerçekçiliğine yaklaşımı daha da fazlasını katmıştır. Bu makale güce ve onun hayatımıza ve bir anlamda siyaset üzerindeki etkilerine olan güç ahlakına odaklanacaktır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Güç, ahlak, politika, Machiavelli

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*"The leader should know how to enter into evil when necessity commands."*

*Niccolò Machiavelli*

Morality can be viewed in many different perspectives, it can be a norm to protect our society or it can be a tool for order. Many might think that the morality of power can indicate evil, especially when a ruling party exercises it over the society for a higher purpose like security. Because of that can we really decide what is necessary to keep the security intact or can we resort to evil for great good? Evil is a concept that causes chaos in society which brings ruin for the functions of the social construct or personal lives which we experience and enjoy right now. But the concept of power includes all of these within itself for in a higher sense, Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli understood these concepts, especially within the structures of the political order. We can assume all of the power and evil get linked when the moral thinking gets in the picture (Lammers, J., & Stapel, D. A., 2009). Also the most basic connections between morality and power can create complex dilemmas with the direct effects of power to undermine and elevate the morality over all (Lammers, J., Galinsky, A. D., Dubois, D., & Rucker, D. D., 2015).

Within the scope of these questions and this study, we will try to go even more deep down to the source of morality of power. Of course, some times I will use the compass of *The Prince* which was written by Niccolò Machiavelli to lay down these questions even more. First question is to be loved or be feared for a ruler? We should all try to ask ourselves this essential question which was tried to be observed by Niccolò Machiavelli in his master piece, *The Prince*:

*“Upon this question arises: whether it be better to be loved than feared or feared than loved? It may be answered that one should wish to be both, but, because it is difficult to unite them in one person, it is much safer to be feared than loved, when, of the two, either must be dispensed with.” (pp. 66)*

Love or be feared, these affections can lead to the very corruption that power can lead to and at the end even the fear of power can corrupt one’s morality over his/her mighty rule. All moral senses can be corrupted by power for some say the great good or security so thus far makes power evil, or does it? Machiavelli’s *The Prince* also observes in many examples with both historically and personally that rules acted upon the good which brought ruin to their people and there are also some who acted with the evil that also brought prosperity and glory to their own people in the concept of morality and power (Robisheaux, T., 2016). All of these are the facts of morality and power, which show that they are interconnected through the decisions which are taken by the individuals that have capacity to govern at the first place for better or worse. Interconnections and conceptions between the morality and power proves to be their own Yin and Yang in some fashion. Even now our conception of power changes through ethical means over nations and international politics (Kortunov, A. V, 1988).

## **2.HOLDING THE POWER**

Power is flexible, it can be lost and can be obtained from many things but the most important part of the concept of power is to keep it and hold it intact for oneself. Diving through the lairs of power is one thing but people who are struggling to keep the power are diving through even more difficult paths. Path of morality in first place can be tricky for an individual of power because a ruler or monarch can act in the edges of morality to keep their power, they can torment their enemies to prevent the losing of power in the means of stability and prosperity for their own kind. Of course, there are some who are using their power with religion and nationality with patriotic causes to put fears in the hearts of their own people even morally for control (Weber, T., 1964). Again, it connects to the morality of power and evil basically observing that, can the means justify ends (Lamprecht, S., 1920)? This way of thinking considered one of the greatest excuses for many to hold their power in the means of not losing their control over society or more for no matter the cause. When someone justifies the evil by doing good, human understanding of morality gets complex and complicated especially in the means of politics for holding the power. Evil is always behind the curtains of humanity when we seek to save our powers for better or worse especially between us and the others. Even more evil is hidden when the fear of losing any election or competition for power can lead to moral corruption or even can create frauds (Gandhi, J., & Przeworski, A., 2009).

There are always someone pulling the strings of morality for control, using the tools of society and humanity for higher gain of power. Sometimes in their eyes, they are the heroes of the story, all these torments, fears and corruption of morality happened for a better future, that’s what they always assume for better or worse in the end. According to these assumptions, we can assure to ourselves that power is a corrupting tool for the people in high positions (Cislak, A., Cichocka, A., Wojcik, A. D., & Frankowska, N., 2018). Let us we imagine a situation, for example there is a ruler who is struggling within his or her government to maintain the stability and prosperity in the country. He/she sought the ways of power until the very edges of morality to keep the balance of power between the government and oneself but at the end there must always be a decision to keep the power, to gather balance and there always be someone to get hurt in many ways, in the eyes of the many this can even indicate what democracy is. As we can observe from these kinds of situations holding the power demands sacrifice and some consider this evil and some consider this necessary at the end.

### 3. DOES POWER ALWAYS CORRUPTS?

I believe that the power is a pure source like nature itself, it is not necessarily evil or impossible with moral compass. Power is not black and white, I always assumed it as blank and we fill it while we are using it. But of course, some others are more pessimistic than I am. As I observe, Niccolò Machiavelli considers evil as the tool for politics and studies it in his work; *The Prince*. But sometimes evil is just not what it seems from far, it sometimes can be the last stop for someone (governor or ruler) to find the solution for prosperity, but does it make the evil inevitable at the end? Machiavelli's understanding of morality comes into the picture right in this question because he understood the realities of human nature and the absolutes of the international politics. When agendas and interests of the individuals can lead to corruption at the end in the world politics (Sassenberg, K., Ellemers, N., Scheepers, D., & Scholl, A., 2014). Reality of politics had been build over the fact of survival just like the human nature within itself, one will do anything to stay alive even if it means turning to evil. Situations brings justice and injustice together when the context is power (Forst, R., 2005).

I am trying to answer and also avoid the question that within the concept of power the moral corruption is inevitable. I am trying to make people observe that, the moral fallout is completely normal within the politics, even for good purposes. But this effect of power is like a sickness, it can spread between individuals and at the end, since the people are evil deep within themselves, some says soon the morally intact people would even disappear in the face of evil over the concept of politics (Hösle, V., 1989). Conduct of immorality and evil can be considered as a crime but we shouldn't forget to mention wars.

War and conflict are part of human nature, it will always be with us and we all know wars are evil and causes violent crimes but with war comes peace and with peace comes war, it is an eternal cycle. We should observe from this cycle that for peace humanity will always dive into the immorality and evil of war and through peace the cycle of stability shall continue until the time of war comes back. Through the international politics especially after the Cold War morality became more flexible because of the shift of politics from bipolarity to multipolarity, this event of course with the developments of technology caused more options for many actors to act upon the huge sandbox of world politics, with that evil became regular for those who wishes to use it for power at the end. Evil becomes inevitable in the end and I guess that's was what the Machiavelli was trying to teach in his works to us in the concepts of reality.

Self arguing, ego and pragmatism always justifies the power in over all in the terms of duties (Tsahuridu, E. E., 2007). Reality in many cases can be upsetting but also in many cases can open a person's eyes to direct themselves to the right path for power or can lead them to the edges of evil. But what end it will go we can never foresee because many wars were caused by worshipping power and its tools such as immorality to keep that power in the end. Religion can also be inside of the concept of power or ideals of oneself can be taught to use evil for last result or the use of morality in a positive way, many dived through that road and many will continue to do so. Regularity of evil was always usual, not just for politics but also for human nature as well. I believe Machiavelli's *The Prince* tells a great deal to us about the deeds and tools of politics when the concept regulates through the moralities of evil and power. I believe that the realistic approach is always shared between the power and morality when we consider stability and resolve, we should never forget that.

At the end there is always good and there is always evil, but some says they are connected to each other, some good deeds can lead to evil and some evil deeds can cause good especially in the area of international relations. We can assume that morality and world politics are grey and our observation of good with evil can sometime blur to each other. Even when we can talk about the justice in this context like, among the people, sometimes power contributes more to the interests of some than the others (Zalta, E. N., 2015).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Morality, power and politics are always connected and stranded to one another. International relations are always based upon the facts and realism, because of this, morality is mostly shaken and stretch throughout the course for power. Evil acts and immorality can hold power and good deeds with positive norms might lead to power of one to fall or even rise. Ideals can open paths to the edges of morality for the quest to seek more power. To think in the mind of a ruler we must have a direct view point and a realistic approach for world and individual politics. Rulers are tend to use mostly the fear and sometimes love to respond the needs of power in a realistic view point. Again, we are facing the question of morality and concept of power even in the end of this study. For to seek answers to the long existing question we should see the tools for power; evil, good, morals and fear but we should even look deeper to understand the concept and morality of power, we should see the aspect of it.

In my understanding during my studies while I was observing the Machiavelli's works, I understood the needs of politics were not ego or hunger for power, it was only the desire and instinct to survive in this chaotic environment of world politics which continues from the far past of human history. He understood and tried to teach it to the people who holds the power and tried to make them to use this instinct with every tool they can find for survival. That's because we should also understand that there are no places for morality in the concept of power and it doesn't mean there is forcefully evil in it also, because power is a flexible source of need in human nature and that's why that need can not be measured by any morality in the end.

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