Machiavelli's Strategy of War vs. Islamic Concept of Holy War: A critical Analysis

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Abstract- Machiavelli's concept of war for the protection of state is based on deceit, foul play, barbarism, anti-humanism and materialism. His strategic thinking is not for the protection of people but for the territorial expansion. He ignores the concept of morality and humanity in the defense of the state. The strategic thinkers in the modern world designed their national military strategies in line with Machiavelli's strategic doctrine. Contrary to this, Islam has emphasized on the defense of state based on morality and humanity. It strongly discourages the below-the-belt strategy of war and anti-human strategic tactics during national warfare. It discourages the Machiavellian strategic doctrine and upholds the safety of man supreme even in war times. The article is mainly composed of three parts: Part-I is an introduction which deals with the Conceptualisation of Ethics, Morality and Warfare. Part-II deals with the Literature Review and Methodology. Part-III is a comprehensive discussion on the subject-matter (Machiavelli's Concept of War and Western Scholars' views on it and Islamic Concept of Warfare. Part-VI is the conclusion.

Key Words: Machiavelli, Morality, Holy War, Strategy

I. INTRODUCTION

According to William Lilie, "Ethics deals with the standards by which one can judge human actions to be right or wrong. Ethics can be defined as the normative science of conduct, and conduct is a collective name for voluntary actions..... A voluntary action is an action that a man could have done differently if he had so chosen. Voluntary actions include all willed or volitional actions in which there is a conscious process of willing like the action of a student matriculating in a university. Voluntary action also include certain actions, where there may be no conscious process of willing at all, provided that the doer could have prevented or changed the action by choosing to do so.......Conduct may include inward activities like motives and desires as well as outward activities like speech and movements of the doer's limbs, and so these also fall within the sphere of ethics (Lilie, 2004:3-4)." He also points out six moral disciplines (to use a term which may include science, philosophy, and art): i) a positive science of morals, describing men's moral standards in different countries and ages; ii) the normative science of ethics, stating valid moral standards; iii) moral philosophy examining the validity of these standards by determining their place in the universe as a whole; iv) casuistry or applied ethics applying valid standards to particular concrete cases; v) moralising, or practical ethics, a discipline having as its definite aim the improvement of conduct; and vi) the art or practice of living a good life (ibid.: 14).

Paul Roubiczek defines morality as "it is a pattern of behaviour based on the absolute value of the good." He further adds: "the concept of ethics includes morality is wider in scope (Roubiczek, 1969: 5)." The world morality is a contested concept which is different from individual to individual, from society to society, and from country to country. Here we are mainly concerned with the relationship between molarity and warfare.

The concept of war is as old as human history. Human history witnessed a paradigmatic shift in warfare from simplest to more complex. In primitive ages, it was fought with stick and stones. Later on, lethal and sophisticated weapons were invented for the annihilation of the humanity. The concept of weapons of mass destruction even is primitive; however, it has gained currency in 20th century after the establishment of United Nations Organisation and the use of such weapons by the major powers against their enemies. In modern warfare, Machiavelli's principles of war are largely followed, wherein molestation, collateral damages, rape, human rights violation, etc., are the tools to torture the combatants and non-combatants equally (Jalib, 2013: 185).

Parveen Shaukat Ali quotes Karl J. Weintraub as "The Christian doctrine created a religious hierarchy headed by the Pope to watch the activities of the princess and priests so that they would not transgress the path of rectitude. All laws passed by the rulers of Christendom were subject to review by the Papacy in Rome and could be easily nullified by papal dictates. The result was that culling and seeking favours of Pope, remained the biggest political preoccupation of Christian rulers for centuries. In due course the Papacy accumulated so much militant and rigid bureaucratic structure. It was against this arbitrariness, inflexible attitude and abuse of power of Papacy, that religious reformers like Martin Luther and secular philosophies, like Machiavelli unfurled the flag of revolt against Catholicism. The moral erosion of the religious umbrella which was spread over the Christian world from Rome was also one of the causes which produced aggressive nationalism in Europe at the end of the Middle Ages (Ali, 1980: 2; Weintraub, 1969: 60)."

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

For this piece of research work, the international and national literature consisted of both books and research articles have been consulted. The scholars also took benefits from original works of Machiavelli. Foreign scholars' work on Machiavelli was also consulted to make this study more objective rather than subjective based upon prejudice. In addition, for Islamic Concept of Warfare, original sources of knowledge (Holy Quran and Holy Traditions of the Prophet ﷺ) have been consulted for comparative study and analytical study.[1]

Methodology

This study is primarily is qualitative in nature rather than quantitative. An intra-disciplinary approach has been applied to substantiate argument. This study is political, strategic, and philosophical based upon comparative and analytical methods. Content analysis has been applied to reach to the depth of the truth.

III. DISCUSSION

The socio-political and economic turmoil in Italy influenced Machiavelli and forced him to design a novel strategy to protect his native homeland and his people from such anarchical situation. According to Bhandari, "Italy became a battle-ground of intriguing and ambitious potentates, local as well as foreign. During this period of perpetual political disorder and internecine war, public leaders were actuated more by selfish motives than public interests. Public morality was extremely low. Statecraft was the chief arm of defence. Securing the independence of Italy and restoring prosperity to her cities became the master passion with him (Bhandari, 1986: 192)." For Machiavelli, the preservation of state was more important than the individual. Machiavelli's popular work, *The Prince,* is a practical manual on how to gain, maintain, and expand power. He dedicated to the ruler of Florence, Lorenzo di Medici (Vioti, & Kauppi, 1987: 37). The ruler can use all means, fair or foul, for this purpose. His concept of strategy of war for the protection of his state revolves around the following basic concepts:

First, Machiavelli believes in double-standard of morality, one for the ruled and other for the ruler. During normal peaceful conditions, both ruler and the ruled are bound to comply with the ethics. However, the ruler will set aside the ethical considerations when internal and external threats are posed to security of the state because the security and protection of the state is fundamental duty of the ruler. In this regard Amir Ullah Khan & Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal opine that "Machiavelli believed in the traditional or military security, malignant nature of men; a distinctive code of war strategy for the ruler which was inapplicable to common citizens wherein the ruler could set aside morality for the defence of the state (Khan & Jaspal, 2013: 400; Burchill, 2005: 30; Machiavelli, 1940)." Machiavelli is quoted for further substantiation of the argument: "There are two kinds of combat: one with laws, the other with force. The first proper to man, the second to beasts; but because the first is often not enough, one must have recourse to the second. Therefore it is necessary for a prince to know well how to use the beast and the man. This role was taught covertly to princes by ancient writers, who wrote that Achilles, and man y other ancient princes, were given to Chiron the centaur to be raised, so that he would look after them with his discipline. To have as teacher a half-beast, half–man means nothing other than that a prince needs to know how to use both natures; and the one without the other is not lasting" (Machiavelli, 1998: 69). Second, Machiavelli believes in all sorts of brutality during war, and has no respect for humanity. Even during ordinary circumstances, the ruler or Prince should use unfair means to stay in power. In this connection, he stated: "A prince, therefore so as to keep

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[1] The Literature is given as References at the end of this article instead of reproducing it.

his subjects united and faithful, should not care about the infamy of cruelty, because with very few examples he will be more merciful than those who for the sake of too much mercy allow disorders to continue, from which come killings or robberies; for these customarily hurt} a whole community, but the executions that come from the prince hurts one particular person. And of all princes, it is impossible for the new prince to escape a name for cruelty because new states are full of dangers" (Ibid: 65-66).

Third, Machiavelli depicted a pessimistic picture of human beings. He considered man by nature selfish, greedy, and warmonger (McClelland, 1996: 147). Fourth, Machiavelli has less regard for Christianity as a religion. He relegated the status of religion and considered religion as one of the departments of the state. He considered religion as a tool of exploitation.

Fifth, Machiavelli believes in the separation of ethics from politics (Vioti, & Kauppi, 1987: 37). Machiavelli does not believe in morality or ethics because of his practical experience in realpolitik. However, morality cannot be neglected while employing violence in the defence of state or expansion of state. The concept of ethics was not implicit in his work The Prince or Discourses (Minter, 1992: 32).

Western Scholars' views on Machiavelli's Concept of Morality in War

The concept of morality in war has always remained the subject of debate. Different scholars, strategic thinkers, and academicians have interpreted it according to their understandings. The inter-relationship between morality and war leads to the division of strategic thinkers into two broad theoretical schools – morality of the war itself (*jus ad bellum)* and the ethical constraints within any given war *(jus in bello).* According to Vioti and Kapuri, "the scholars have pondered the subject, building on a tradition in Western thought extending to the writings of St. Augustine and before (Vioti, & Kauppi, 1987: 532).

Regarding the rationale behind war, Vioti and Kapuri quote Clausewitz:

"War is decidedly not a legitimate end in itself but is merely a means used to achieve essentially political purposes. That war should not be waged without legitimate purpose – that it should at least be subordinate to the political objective or serve some national interests – can be understood as a limit but nevertheless moral statement in itself (Ibid)."

Machiavelli's Prince is the practical manual of power politics, balance of power, conflicts, strategies to counter internal and external threats, and national (state) security. He justifies using all means – fair or foul – for the security of the state by relegating the morality. There are two separate and distinct ethics: first, conventional religious morality concerned with such matters as individual salvation (the ethics of ultimate ends) and, second, by contrast, the moral obligations of rulers who must take actions to provide for national security (the ethics of responsibility) (Vioti, & Kauppi, 1987: 37; Gerth and Mills: 1946: 120).

It is noteworthy that the major issues like geographical disintegration of Italy into the Kingdom of Naples in the South, the duchy of Milan in the North-West, the aristocratic republic of Venice in the North-East, and the republic of Florence and the Papal state in the centre; political corruption, state's institutional decay, harsh policies of government, lip-service to good faith and truthfulness, profligacy, debauchery, selfishness, and moral degradation lead to call Machiavelli's era of the bastards and adventurers (Sabine, 2000: 337-338). George H. Sabine quotes Machiavelli on his views on religion as:

"We Italian then owe to the Church of Rome and to her priests our having become irreligious and bad: but we owe her a still greater debt and one that will be the cause of our ruin, namely, that the Church has kept and still keeps our country divided (Ibid; Detmold, 1891)."

Islamic Concept of Strategy of War

Parveen Shaukat Ali is of the opinion: "The main difficulty with Machiavellism was that it preached that political anarchy would come to an end if politics was anesthised against religious and moral ideals. Machiavelli's concern about peace and stability of the state was genuine, but he failed to realise that by handing over arbitrary power to the rulers, which was not hedged around by ethical principles, he was making them irresponsible and tyrannical. Although in the religious and philosophical circles he was decried, in the realm of practical politics, Machiavelli remained the acknowledged mentor of rulers, and the resultant misery, helplessness and poverty of the masses, that the seeds of the modern concept of the rights of man were sown. These seeds were fertilised by two revolutions – the American Revolution of 1776 and the French Revolution of 1789 and blood and sweat of countless numbers of human beings who unsung and unnoticed died in the torture chambers of the despots (Ali, 1980: 4)."

According to Prof. Khusheed Ahmad:

"Islam is the religion of morality and humanity. It ordains its believers to comply with Divine teachings to gain maximum pleasure of Allah. This is laid down in the service of mankind. The fundamental principle of Islamic foreign policy is to establish global peace by discouraging and eliminating sedition and seditious elements. Sedition leads to anarchy, while Islam abhors it (Ahmad, 2016: 208).

Islam has its own moral system or code of conduct for both peace time and war. Islam has its own 'Theory of Morality'. Islam forbids spreading immorality (Ilyas & Syed, 2019: 13-52).

"Do not mischief {moral or material) on the earth, after it hath been set in order, but call on him with fear and hope: For the Mercy of Allah is always near to those who practise virtue". (VII: 56)

Similarly, Islam discourages cooperation in sin and wrong doings. It is also a sin to be accomplice in one's wrong acts, which is strictly admonished in Islam. Holy Quran states:

"*And do not help one another in sin and transgression: And fear Allah, Verily, Allah is severe in punishment". (V: 3)*

Islam discourages all sorts of disturbances, strives, and war leading to encroaching on the rights of other fellow-beings. Islam also discourages war for material gains. Morality is generally conceived as man's personal act to do right and to avoid wrong doing. Islam gives a comprehensive moral code to its believers. That is why Islam may be called as 'the religion of morality'. In the Holy Quran, clear commandments have been given to wage war against the enemies of Islam but with certain restrictions; and the believers are directed to refrain from transgression during warfare. Holy Quran says:

And fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but transgress not the limits. Truly! Allah likes not transgressors. (2:190)

On another occasion, the believers are instructed to avoid killing of innocent people; and in case an innocent person has been killed then the killer will be penalized and will give blood money to the heirs of the killed. Holy Quran says:

And do not kill anyone whose killing Allah has forbidden, except for a just cause. And whoever is killed wrongfully, We have given his heir the authority (to demand Qisas – Law of Equality in punishment – or to forgive, or to take Diyah (blood-money). But let him not exceed limits in the matter of taking life. Verily, he is helped (by the Islamic law). (XVII: 33)

In addition to Quranic Verses, there are some golden principles of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to observe high moral standards even during war. These are:

First, the fight should be against the disbelievers for the sake of Allah, without taking personal interests. It is worth noting that in society human beings fight for gaining power, money, or glory, or simply they fight for personal gains and interests. These selfish motives generate sedition which leads to anarchy and bloodshed in any society. Islam discourages it. It ordains that the fight should be for the sake of Allah. Allah in the Holy Quran commands:

Say (o Muhammad □): "Verily, my Prayer, my sacrifice, my living, and my dying are for Allah, the Lord of the Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists).

Second, Holy Prophet ﷺ says that the fight should be against those who disbelieve in Allah. Third, during war the fighters should not transgress the defined boundaries of Islam. Fourth, the fighters should refrain from mutilating the combatants. Lastly, fighters should not kill children or hermits (Ibn Kathir, 1998: 308-9).

A. J. Wensinck quotes the Holy Tradition of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who said: "Avoid seven mortal sins. It was asked: which? He answered, Polytheism, magic, unlawful man slaying, spending the money of orphans, usury, desertion from battle, and slandering chaste but heedless women who are faithful (Wensinck, 1965:39; Ali, 1980:70)." Similarly, Peters also points out that "Islam guarantees the protection of life, religion, and property on non-Muslims like Zoroastrians (Peters, 1973:170; Ali, 1980:73)."

Parveen justifies the concept of Holy war and removes the misconception about it in the following words:

"There is nothing in the Holy Quran or the Holy Traditions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ from which one could construe that Islam enjoins upon its followers to engage in war of aggression. Muslims are allowed a defensive war, and from the general moral and spiritual climate of their belief system it is shared to extract any clue which would indicate that followers of Islam have a religious duty to indulge in aggressive warfare. In the case of Jihad also the charges on non-Muslim commentators are based more on the history of Crusades, than on the true understanding of the term Jihad as used in the Holy Quran."

It is worth to mention that there are many holy traditions in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ forbade the slaughtering of defenceless people, women, children, old people, and weak. The Prophet ﷺ says clearly, "Do not kill weak old men, small children, or women (Al-Hajjaj, 2007: 26)."

Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, the first Caliph, gave these instructions to his armies: "I instruct you in ten matters: Do not kill women, children, the old, or the infirm; do not cut down fruit-bearing trees; do not destroy any town; do not kill sheep or camels except for the purposes of eating; do not burn date-trees or submerge them; do not steal from the booty and do not be cowardly" (Al-Hajjaj: 2000:17).Hasan al-Basri, a prominent Muslim stated: "Mutilation (*muthla*), [imposing] thirst (*ghulul*), the killing of women, children, and the old (*shuyukh*) — the ones who have no judgment for themselves (*la ra'y la hum*), and no fighters among them;

[the killing of] monks and hermits, the burning of trees, and the killing of animals for other than the welfare [of eating] are forbidden in war (No Author, 2007:35)."

IV. CONCLUSION

The comparative study of Machiavelli's concept of ethics in warfare and Islamic concept of morality in warfare shows that the divergence of objectives between the two. The former has material and worldly objectives; while the latter has divine objectives. In former case, war is fought to gain material gains and for the sake of piece of land. In latter case, the war is fought to gain the pleasure of Allah as mentioned in the Holy Quran. Simply, the Islamic law of war prohibits naked aggression, the harming of non-combatants, and excessive cruelty. It protects the life, honour, and other rights of non-combatants, weaker classes of the society, religious clergies, etc during war.

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