# Western political thought: machiavelli

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Nicollo Machiavelli is one of the political thinkers that have contributed immensely to the development of the political thought. However, his thoughts and principles were a radical departure from those of his contemporaries. One of the political thoughts that were different from that of the past thinkers was on the morality of power. According to him morals cannot be used to judge the legitimate and illegitimate application of power. He claims that power and authority are equal variables and anyone that has power gains the right to give commands.

He claimed that being good does not give one a moral authority and goodness does not give power to anyone. This view conflicts with the moralistic political theory that associated morality with authority (Nelson, 1995). Machiavelli criticizes the moralistic concept of authority saying that it does not add any value to power. The other political thought that was distant from the past thinkers was on the subject of law and force. Machiavelli first agreed with the past thinkers saying that good laws are important for an orderly political system.

However he claimed that good people do not like following laws which means that for the good laws to work, there must be coercion. He wanted to imply that good laws have their legitimacy founded on the use of force. This thought appeared to be cruel, but in reality, laws cannot be legitimate if they are not accompanied by coercive force (Sydney, 2005). The last extreme thought by Machiavelli was on his treatment of politics. In opposition to the definition of the past thinkers who saw politics pragmatically.

Machiavelli dismissed politics and an entity that could only be seen from the supremacy of powers that are coercive. The authority in politics according to him cannot exist independently and politics is all about gaining supremacy for personal interests (Nelson, 1995). Though Machiavellian political thoughts were different from those of the past thinkers, modern political theory is based on Machiavellian principles and thoughts. His eccentric thoughts have provided a foundation for the modern political theory.