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Abstract

The concept of political judgement arose from a historical process, incorporating the thoughts of philosophers and thinkers such as Plato, Hobbes and Locke. While Plato was the first philosopher to use the term ‘political judgement’, Aristotle developed the concept, and Spinoza focused on ‘liberty of judgement’. While these philosophers were explaining the concept of political judgement, they mentioned a lot of varieties, such as rights, justice, freedom, law and equality (Ibid.). Even though some different points have been made by authors and political scientists in the definition and concept of political judgement and strategy, there is a strong connection between Berlin’s political judgement and the scope of strategy. This essay will firstly include Isaiah Berlin’s understanding of political judgement when considering different thoughts about political judgement. Secondly, it will analyse the scope of strategy by explaining the meaning of the strategy from different perspectives. Thirdly, it will criticise the relationship between political judgement and strategy.

Keywords: Isaiah Berlin; Political judgement; Strategy

Short Communication

It should be explained that Berlin's political judgement concept has own characteristic in itself [1]. According to Berlin [2], there are no specific methods or certain ways to make successful political judgement. Mathematical calculations or formulas can be used in some disciplines, especially in natural sciences; however, in social sciences, it is not possible to follow a certain way of thinking. Berlin argues that there are many factors that can contribute to the success of statesmen, and these factors can be divided into some dimensions-such as economic, individual and political. This is in contrast to an individualistic approach, which does not need to have general perspectives of the issues (Ibid.). As such, statesmen should consider a variety of disciplines, such as sociology, economics or politics, in order to make successful political judgement. To be able to make a successful political judgement, it is not enough to judge the issues by considering different perspectives; there should be coordination between decision mechanisms and their tools. According to Geuss, there should be a connection between individuals and institutions in relation to political judgement [3]. The failures in this relationship may cause some unstable and unclear political decisions that may also lead to unsuccessful political judgement.

As McGeer and Pettit put it, 'The psychological journals abound in lists of the frames, biases and habits that confound the evidence-sensitivity of judgement’ [3]. Prinz also thinks that when a statesman judges something or someone, some of his perceptions or thoughts may include a degree of emotion. Berlin also talks about this issue, mentioning that many people have prejudices or negative feelings about statesmen who might make wrong decisions due to these emotions [2]. He also argues that there may be some solutions that can prevent this way of thinking (Ibid.). Many 17th- and 18th-century philosophers agree that there is only one universal truth that prevents potential threats against humankind, and this universal truth protects the statesmen from making mistakes (Ibid.). However, Berlin refutes this idea, believing that a statesman can be successful by understanding the issue itself, which sometimes requires understanding the micro (or macro) structure of the issue clearly by looking at various disciplines, such as economics, sociology and politics, or more personal dimensions of the issue [2]. He also adds that this ability cannot be clearly taught. In order to make successful political judgement, analysis alone is not enough; statesmen should be able to think from different perspectives and combine them to be able to find a solution to the problem (Ibid.). Judd and Dawning discuss the structure of some unsuccessful political judgements, saying: 'Many political judgements are stereotypic judgments. In political realm, we categorize others by the positions we believe they hold and the affiliations we believe they espouse' [4]. On that account, making good political judgements could be difficult for statesmen. If a statesman only takes one side of the issue into consideration when seeking a solution, it may be counterproductive because even a specific issue can require consideration of many interconnected issues. Therefore, statesmen have to look to different disciplines, such as politics, economics or sociology, in order to solve the problem. There are varying opinions about the act of political judgement among philosophers. According to Hont, even though there is no specific method that should be used in political judgement in a Kantian sense, theory needs to have some practices to be real and applicable to the issues in which the process of political judgement emerges [3]. A Kantian sense of political judgement also has some similarities with Berlin's political judgement concept in relation to the idea that the political judgement process does not have any particular procedure. In both conceptions, it is not possible to follow a certain way to achieve successful and effective political judgment. The best way to achieve effective political judgment can change depending on the complexity of the situation. If this complexity increases in itself, a statesman may need to benefit from various disciplines at the same time.
Secondly, the concept of ‘strategy’ should also be defined to understand the relationships between political judgement and strategy. Stone mentions: ‘For present purposes, I propose to define strategy as the instrumental link between military means and political ends. Strategy in other words is concerned with the process by which armed force is translated into intended political effects’ [5]. Different authors, commanders or statesmen may have different approaches to the scope and application of strategy. However, in order to improve understanding of the scope of strategy, some basic points about the scope of strategy should be mentioned. According to The Art of War by Sun Tzu, gaining many victories from different battlegrounds is not always more efficient than preventing the threat of enemy without fighting [6]. In sum, Sun Tzu thinks that statecraft is as important as gaining victories in battlegrounds. Moreover, while Napoleon Bonaparte, who is known as the first strategist of the modern world, was gaining many victories in battlefields, he could not successfully create a general strategy that supports previous victories. This caused the emergence of some questions about Napoleon’s strategic view. Martel [5] says that: ‘He assumed that by mastering war at the tactical and operational levels, he would achieve strategic, and arguably even grand strategic, victories.’ As such, having a good strategy means establishing good governing of cause and effect relationships between military force and political decisions that were aimed to reach.

Thirdly, when the relationship between political judgment and strategy is looked, it can be seen that there is a clear connection between political judgement and strategy. Good political judgement leads to better strategic decisions. The decision makers analyse each relevant issue by considering different perspectives of the issue and the disciplines that may be related to that issue; clearly, their strategies become more efficient and effective. In a Hobbesian sense, the judgement is also important for providing peace and order in society; however, misjudgement causes disorder and a state of chaotic nature that dominates people’s lives in the Hobbesian sense [7]. According to many philosophers and political theorists, including Berlin, while having good judgement leads to better decisions and order, judgements that are made without thinking about every aspect of the issue by promulgating the unclear or problematic decisions usually cause many serious negative effects, such as breaking the order of the society, causing new sequencing problems which cannot be considered independently of previous decisions, or injuring the statesmen or state authority. The connection between political judgement and strategy comes into play at this stage. Strategy could not be considered as an independent process that maybe viewed as different from the process of political judgment [8,9].

Taking everything into consideration, political judgment is a crucial element in the creation of effective and successful strategy. Creating strategy is not easy and statesmen may have to take into consideration many different aspects of the issue, from economics to sociology. Statesmen should also know how to use different concepts together, or which discipline is relevant to the specific issue. Even though there are no set rules about using different ideas from different perspectives effectively, statesmen should have the ability to gather small pieces in order to see the whole picture. In order to have a certain strategy, a statesman has to understand every aspect of the issue and have enough ability to make successful political judgement. As a statesman makes successful political judgment, he will better understand the different dimensions of the issue so that he reduces the possibility of making mistakes in the particular strategy and makes better decisions—not just for the specific people or issues, but also for the potential future effects of the current situation.

References