

# Absolutism and democracy essay sample

[Politics](#), [Democracy](#)



During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there were two forms of government in Europe: absolutism, which gave unlimited power to the monarchs, and democracy, which gave power to the people. Which was more effective for this time period? Well, while both absolutism and democracy had their strengths and weaknesses, absolutism was more effective during this time. Machiavelli, who wrote *The Prince*, King Louis XIV of France, and King James I of England all believed absolutism to be most effective.

Machiavelli felt it was best to be feared, not loved. He believed that if you trusted others, they would eventually disobey you. In his book *The Prince*, Machiavelli wrote, “ For all men in general this observation may be made: they are ungrateful, fickle, and deceitful, eager to avoid dangers, and avid for gain, and while you are useful to them they are all with you, but when it [danger] approaches they turn on you. Any prince, trusting only in their works and having no other preparations made, will fall to ruin, for friendships that are bought at a price and not by greatness and nobility of soul are paid for indeed, but they are not owned and cannot be called upon in time of need.

Men have less hesitation in offending a man who is loved than one who is feared, for love is held by a bond of obligation which, as men are wicked, is broken whenever personal advantage suggests it, but fear is accompanied by the dread of punishment, which never relaxes”. Machiavelli is saying that most men are afraid and with fear you forget your responsibilities, and since most men were afraid of the consequences of voting, they would theoretically run away. He believed absolutism was the way to go because in a democracy, all men would be controlling.

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Absolutism worked because decisions were made quickly. King Louis XIV of France believed it was easier to have one head who decided which idea s/he thought was best, instead of having whole groups of people trying to share their ideas. According to Louis XIV, “ The head alone has the right to deliberate and decide, and the functions of all the other members consist only in carrying out the commands given to them... The more you grant . . . [to the assembled people], the more it claims ... The interest of the state must come first”. Although his ideas were unsupported by some philosophes such as Montesquieu, who believed “ There can be no liberty where the executive, legislative, and judicial powers are united in one person or body of persons, because such concentration is bound to result in arbitrary despotism”, people in the 17th and 18th century did not have enough time to think deeply. The people would rather focus on surviving than making new laws, and dying.

King James I of England ruled through the belief of the divine right of kings, which was a concept that stated monarchs draw their powers directly from God, making them superior. He believed “ The state of monarchy is the supremest thing upon earth; for kings are not only God’s lieutenants upon earth, and sit upon God’s throne, but even by God Himself they are called gods . . . Kings are justly called gods, for that they exercise a . . . divine power upon earth . . . God hath power to create or destroy, make or unmake at His pleasure, to give life or sent death, to judge all and to be judged nor accountable to none, to raise low things and to make high things low at His pleasure . . . And the like power have kings”. This was effective because

anyone who went against the monarch was going against God. The people were forced to obey the monarch.

Absolutism was definitely the most widely used form of government in the 17th and 18th centuries. Democracy was not nearly as widely used. Which form of government was more effective during this time? People in this time were not as educated as those in society today, and it was easy for them to just follow the words of the absolute monarch. The people were able to focus on not becoming a grizzly bear's supper because decisions were made for them, making absolutism a more effective form of government in the 17th and 18th centuries, as believed by Machiavelli, King Louis XIV, and King James I.