

# Castiglione and machiavelli essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

War, Politics, Castiglione, and Machiavelli During the Renaissance period, many great minds expressed their ideas and talents to their fullest potential. Neither Baldesar Castiglione nor Niccoló Machiavelli were exceptions. In Castiglione's greatest work, *The Book of the Courtier*, he describes the qualities that should be possessed by the perfect courtier in a compilation of made-up conversations between the members of the court of Urbino. In arguably Machiavelli's best work, *The Prince*, he sets a number of guidelines that, in his opinion, prospective leaders should follow in order to achieve greatness as a ruler. After studying both of these important pieces, one can clearly see that Castiglione and Machiavelli do indeed possess their own specific views concerning war and politics. If each read the other's book, Castiglione and Machiavelli would definitely have a response to the advice of one another regarding the topics purpose of war, how fair and honest a ruler should be to his people, and what the most effective type of government is.

When concerning the idea of the overall purpose of war, Castiglione and Machiavelli would unquestionably have a response to the advice of one another. In *The Book of the Courtier*, Castiglione states, "It is wrong to always be at war and not to seek to attain peace as the objective; some rulers suppose that their principal aim must be to subjugate their neighbours..." (Castiglione, 303) What this statement basically means is that a leader should not intend to destroy their opposition in war, but that they should fight until peace can be realized. Castiglione gives an example of a society that did not agree with the same mentality which he did. He explained of the Scythians; a group of people who would not allow anyone who had not slain an enemy to drink from the cup at their solemn feasts.

This attitude toward war would cause people to ? become bellicose and aggressive,? according to Castiglione.

On the contrary to the view of Castiglione, Machiavelli considered war to be an engagement where one must crush their enemies rather than only attain peace. He states,?? Men must be either cajoled or crushed? for they will revenge themselves for slight wrongs, while for the grave ones they cannot.? (Machiavelli, 7) In other words, Machiavelli? s statement means that when fighting the opposition, they must be destroyed to prevent further harm. By examining Machiavelli? s statement, it is evident that his overall purpose of war is not just to obtain peace, but also to annihilate the enemy to ensure fewer confrontations in the future. When concerning the idea of the purpose of war, Machiavelli would probably advise Castiglione to be more ruthless and wipe out the enemy. The response that Castiglione would probably offer to Machiavelli is to be more humane and moral, rather than to attempt to destroy a nation.

Machiavelli and Castiglione would most likely disagree with the opinions of each other concerning how honest and fair a ruler should be to his people. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli believes that a prince should have no problem deceiving his people. He states that a prince only needs a ? fortunate astuteness? to win over his people; not luck, courage, or talent. A prince also should show the people some generosity, but not be too generous.

Machiavelli also felt if the prince? s people became too comfortable, then they will tend to try and take advantage of him. In contrast, Castiglione believed that a prince should possess two things: the first is ? clear insight and judgement,? and the second is the ? issuing the lawful commands in the

proper manner, concerning things that are reasonable and within their authority.? (Castiglione, 302) These views are very different when considering how fair and honest a prince should be to his constituents. If Machiavelli could respond to Castiglione's opinion he probably would tell him that a prince should think more for himself, and not for the people.

Castiglione would perhaps respond to Machiavelli's advice by reminding him that the job of a prince is to ? serve the people.? Machiavelli and Castiglione each possessed their own opinion on what type of government is more effective: a republic or a monarchy. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli is writing a book for a prince, which is part of a monarchy. Machiavelli also willingly served under princes during his lifetime. In Chapter 5 of *The Prince*, he also gives advice on how a prince should deal with republics: destroy them. Does this make him a monarchist? No. Machiavelli also served under republic governments in Florence. In another one of his works, *The Discourses*, Machiavelli proves to favor a republic. In *The Prince*, he is only giving advice about how to run a monarchy; this does not necessarily mean that he prefers one. As for Castiglione, monarchy was indeed his preference for a form of government.

I should always prefer the rule of a good prince?? which was stated in the Fourth Book in *The Book of the Courtier*. (Castiglione, 296) He also writes at one point,?? I also claim that it is easier to find one good and wise man than to find many who are such.? This quote is stating that he believes it would be easier to find one capable man to be the leader rather than to find an entire group (republic) of capable men to be leaders. Machiavelli would more than

likely respond to the advice of Castiglione by telling him why he believed a republic is more effective than a monarchy, and vice versa.

After examining *The Book of the Courtier*, by Baldesar Castiglione, and *The Prince*, by Niccoló Machiavelli, one can clearly identify that each man had their own specific views concerning war and politics. If each read the other's book, Castiglione and Machiavelli would definitely have a response to the advice of one another regarding the topics of the purpose of war, how fair and honest a ruler should be to his people, and what the most effective type of government is.